

**An exploration of how discourses of efficiency and social justice shaped
the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector with special
reference to TVET colleges**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy



**Education Policy Studies
Stellenbosch University**



by

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March 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to the following:

Foremost, to my heavenly Father whose presence and support I experienced, especially when I faced a number of very challenging obstacles, which I had to overcome to complete this study.

Second, to Doctor Cathy Robertson, for her wise guidance and motivation which led to the completion of this study.

Third, to Professor Aslam Fataar, for his support and critical comments.

Fourth, to Professor Berté van Wyk, for his wise leadership and encouragement, especially during difficult times.

Fifth, to Professor Nelleke Bak, with her expert academic knowledge.

In general, to all the JS Gericke library staff, especially Ms Lucinda Raadt whose friendly assistance ensured that I could always rely on them to obtain the research material that I requested.

Leslie Daniels

Declaration

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my departed parents whose sacrifices enabled me to have a quality education so that I, in turn, can serve my community.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the influences of market-directed educational policies, underpinned by neoliberalism, to shape technical and vocational education and training practices at Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges post-1994. Given the financial constraints of the general South African budget, the government at the time believed that such an approach was appropriate because it was conducive to promoting efficiency and accountability in education. This approach, they thought, would ensure that the delivery of the desired educational outcomes, such as higher pass and throughput rates of college graduates with work-related skills, would be achieved.

Prevailing educational discourses, as articulated in sources such as academic literature, public documents and the news media, not only question the appropriateness of market-oriented policies in education that target efficiency practices, but also question the lack of practices promoting social justice at TVET colleges. Therefore, this study questions whether the pursuit of efficiency targets at TVET colleges actually promoted the sustainability of social justice practices at these institutions. This study also examines whether it is feasible to hold both a market-oriented approach as well as a social justice approach simultaneously, by examining this tension, conceptually and in actual practice, by means of the wider philosophical framework of pragmatism. A conceptual investigation was chosen as the methodology to steer this study to its conclusion.

On the one hand, the post-apartheid government has the responsibility of promoting policies aimed at removing the inherited barriers arising from unequal power relations that prevented equity, access and participation. On the other hand, in a globalised economy, the government has to ensure efficient use of limited resources and to ensure an educated workforce that can compete in the knowledge economy. In the post-apartheid era, tensions have emerged between issues of equity and efficiency. In effect, the government faces a policy dilemma, namely, that an increase in efficiency will more than likely compromise issues of equity and vice versa.

The two objectives appear to be at odds with one another, but this thesis concludes that there is not necessarily mutual exclusion at the conceptual level. This study also emphasises that it is not impossible to maintain a delicate balance between the two. However, it needs to be borne in mind that policies aimed at social justice (such as increased access and redress) affect the actual quality of delivery and the need for increased resources.

Despite the tension in real terms – interpreted in the light of a Deweyan pragmatist framework where what works is ‘right’ – the two discourses and resultant policies and practices can, to an extent, be practically reconciled. TVET colleges have included a

substantially increased number of previously disadvantaged students who now have access to a college education, one that shows improved pass rates, reported improvements from Umalusi in quality assurance, rising qualification levels of staff, and a reported improvement in the availability of educational resources at TVET colleges. Nevertheless, in response to the question of whether market-oriented policies were actually successful in delivering the desired goals that were set for TVET, a definite no can be justified.

Despite the tensions and potentially contradictory discourses, it is possible for TVET colleges to negotiate the precarious path between the two competing goals. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to recognise the tensions in order to prevent conceptual confusion and actual unwanted outcomes. However, further empirical studies need to be conducted to examine how, in actual, pragmatic terms, this complex balance plays itself out in multiple practices with varying consequences.

Key words: TVET colleges, neoliberalism, critical pragmatism, pragmatism, market-oriented policies, efficiency, effectiveness, social justice, access, equity, redress.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie stel ondersoek in na die invloede van markgerigte onderwysbeleide, ondersteun deur neoliberalisme, in die ontwikkeling van tegniese en beroepsgerigte onderwys- en opleidingspraktyke by tegniese en beroepsgerigte onderwys- en opleidings- (TBOO-)kolleges ná 1994. Op grond van die finansiële beperkings van die algemene Suid-Afrikaanse begroting het die destydse regering geglo dat so 'n benadering geskik sou wees omdat dit sou bydra tot die bevordering van doeltreffendheid en toerekenbaarheid in die onderwys. Hierdie benadering, het hulle gereken, sou sorg dat die gewenste onderwysuitkomst, soos hoër slaag- en deurvloeiysifers van kollege-graduandi met werkverwante vaardighede, behaal word.

Heersende onderwysdiskoerse, soos verwoord in bronne soos akademiese literatuur, openbare dokumente en die nuusmedia, bevraagteken nie net die geskiktheid van markgerigte onderwysbeleide wat op doeltreffendheidspraktyke afgestem is nie, maar ook die gebrek aan praktyke wat sosiale geregtigheid by TBOO-kolleges bevorder. Daarom ondersoek hierdie studie of die strewe na doeltreffendheidsteikens by TBOO-kolleges in die praktyk die volhoubaarheid van sosiale geregtighedspraktyke by hierdie instellings bevorder. Die studie ondersoek ook of dit haalbaar is om tegelykertyd 'n markgerigte benadering en 'n benadering van sosiale geregtigheid te volg deur hierdie spanning op sowel konseptuele as praktiese vlak binne die groter filosofiese raamwerk van pragmatisme te bestudeer. 'n Konseptuele ontwerp is gekies as die metodologie om hierdie studie te rig.

Aan die een kant het die postapartheidsregering die verantwoordelikheid om beleide te bevorder wat gemik is op die verwydering van die oorgeërfde hindernisse wat ontstaan het weens ongelyke magsverhoudinge, wat billikheid, toegang en deelname verhoed het. Aan die ander kant moet die regering, in 'n geglobaliseerde ekonomie, doeltreffende gebruik van beperkte hulpbronne verseker, sowel as 'n opgeleide werksmag wat in die kenniseconomie kan meeding. In die postapartheidsera ontstaan daar spanning tussen kwessies van billikheid en doeltreffendheid. Dít bring die regering voor 'n beleidsdilemma te staan, naamlik dat 'n toename in doeltreffendheid heel waarskynlik billikheidskwessies in gevaar sal stel, en andersom.

Ondanks die oënskynlike teenstrydigheid tussen die twee doelstellings, bevind hierdie studie dat daar nie noodwendig wedersydse uitsluiting op die konseptuele vlak is nie. Die studie beklemtoon ook dat dit nie onmoontlik is om in die praktyk die delikate balans tussen die twee doelstellings te handhaaf nie. 'n Mens moet in gedagte hou dat beleide gemik op

sosiale geregtigheid (soos verhoogde toegang en herstel) die werklike gehalte van lewering en die behoefte aan meer hulpbronne beïnvloed.

Ondanks die spanning in reële terme – geïnterpreteer in die lig van 'n Deweyaanse pragmatiese raamwerk waar wat werk 'reg' is – kan die twee diskoerse en gevolglike beleide en praktyke tot 'n mate prakties versoen word. TBOO-kolleges het 'n wesenlike aantal voorheen benadeelde studente ingesluit wat nou toegang het tot kollege-opleiding, met beter slaagsyfers, gerapporteerde verbeterings in gehalteversekering aldus Umalusi, stygende kwalifikasievlakke van personeel, en 'n gerapporteerde verbetering in die beskikbaarheid van onderwys hulpbronne by TBOO-kolleges. In antwoord op die vraag oor of markgerigte beleide inderdaad suksesvol was om die gewenste uitkomst vir TBOO te bereik, is 'n beslisse nee nietemin geregverdig.

Ondanks die spanninge en moontlik teenstrydige diskoerse, is dit moontlik vir TBOO-kolleges om vir hulle 'n weg tussen hierdie twee wedywerende doelstellings te baan. Die doel van die studie is dus om die spanninge te erken ten einde konseptuele verwarring en ongewenste uitkomst in die praktyk te voorkom. Verdere empiriese studies moet egter uitgevoer word om ondersoek in te stel na hoe hierdie komplekse balans, in werklike pragmatiese terme, in veelvuldige praktyke met wisselende gevolge tot uiting kom.

Sleutelwoorde: TBOO-kolleges, neoliberalisme, kritiese pragmatisme, pragmatisme, markgerigte beleide, doeltreffendheid, doelmatigheid, sosiale geregtigheid, toegang, billikheid, herstel

DECLARATION

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
DoL	Department of Labour
ETDP	Education Training and Development Practices
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
FET	Further Education and Training
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HRDS-SA	Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
JIPSA	Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition
NATED	National Accredited Technical Educational Diploma
NC(V)	National Certificate (Vocational)
NCFE	National Committee on Further Education
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework

NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa.
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SDA	Skills Development Act
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VE	Vocational Education
VEOP	Vocational Education Orientation Programme
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

Chapter 1

Orientation to the research

1.1. Introduction

This study will explore the challenges facing TVET colleges that are, according to Greenstein's (1995) thinking, instrumental in establishing goals in education. These are, first, the goal of upliftment of individuals so that they can contribute to the development of the economy and the broader society. Second, the goal of uplifting the economy and transforming society can contribute to the development of previously marginalised individuals and communities (Greenstein, 1995). Both these goals, I argue, have a political undertone in shaping educational practices, which therefore link to Marginson's (1993:23) note in arguing that education is a highly politicised sector. I am referring here to the focuses of educational policies which are of broad public interest and will probably explain the strong participation of noted academic scholars in educational discourses in the public interest.

Akoojee (2008), however, argues that an analysis of the South African TVET policy debate displays a tension between a neoliberal discourse of college transformation into autonomous, efficient and market-led institutions serving the needs of industry, and a continuing espousal of a broader set of educational values around learning, personal development and citizenship. It is this tension, which my thesis will explore. In this regard, I am referring to Chisholm's (1997) claim which reminds us that apartheid bequeathed an enormous legacy of educational inequality. She is referring to the legacy of the former regime which led to unjust educational practices and other related consequences such as, for example, high levels of unskilled youth unemployment. This situation would explain why there was political pressure on the new democratically elected state to deliver and to improve the social situation of the majority of disadvantaged communities.

In this regard, social justice education would, according to Boyles, Carusi & Attick (2009) attempt to bring about social change by addressing social injustice in schools, colleges and the greater community. This perception probably led to Palmer and De Klerk's (2011) claim that since the establishment of the new political dispensation, the South African government has allegedly placed emphasis on the introduction of policies and mechanisms aimed at redressing the legacy of a dysfunctional and unequal education system. However, as a nation, I think South Africa found itself unprepared for the prevailing economic challenges it faced in providing education. Arndt (1929:12) holds that '... things must be judged by their outcome - what works is right', which is a key analytical focus that I have explored in this study. Indeed, I will argue in this thesis that the two basic policy choices which the ANC-led

government faced were a trade-off (tension situation) between economic efficiency and social equity, and between their long and short-term benefits.

1.2. Background to the study

In this section, I shall explore the context of this study in referring to the socio-economic circumstances that existed on the ground, at the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, which shaped significant developments in education. In this regard, I refer to McCord's (2003:34) claim which argues that 'the challenge to the new dispensation in 1994 was to re-orientate the failing South African economy to meet the needs and aspirations of the new democratic South Africa'. This meant first, that spending needed to be redirected to undo the economic injustices of the apartheid era; second, to address issues of equity and redistribution; and third, to re-integrate the country into the global economy (McCord, 2003). In this regard, Christie (2003:5) rightfully argues that '[e]ducation policy and provision were among many areas that required immediate attention to break with the racial distortions and assumptions of apartheid'.

For example, the reality at the dawn of democracy in 1994 revealed a college sector which was regarded by the African National Congress (ANC) government as the vehicle for improving the skills levels of the workers' corps, according to Akoojee, McGrath and Visser (2008), but was unfit for the purpose of promoting social and economic well-being of particularly the under-privileged masses throughout South Africa. However, as the ANC wrestled with its new role as the government, the socio-economic reality on the ground shaped what they would be able to do within the new South African democratic order. Badroodien (2004:44) notes that '[i]n 1994, the incoming South African government inherited an extremely poor skills regime, one based on voluntarism¹, poor quality and narrow, employer-led definitions of skill'. Young (2001), however, holds that although the newly-elected ANC government was burdened by reformist commitments to deliver on their 1994 election promises, it adopted an economistic focus in transforming education.

In other words, the wellbeing of the economy received, as was to be expected, a higher priority because, I argue, the desired social challenges hinged on the availability of a strong economy that would generate the necessary public funding to finance the much-needed social programmes. This perception, I argue, allegedly motivated the new ANC-led government to change its policy focus from following its original planned social-welfarist approach to address the inequalities, to that of an economistic approach. Kraak and Young

¹ The World Book dictionary describes voluntarism as a philosophy, a theory or doctrine that regards the will (rather than the intellect) as the fundamental principle or dominant factor in the individual or the universe.

(2001:2) describe the change in focus as the ‘profound shift away from the original premise that had been established by the democratic movement in the early 1990s’. However, for government to follow this course of action it had to do what Viljoen and Van der Walt (2003) refer to as the absorption of business-related principles into educational management and practices.

Ball (2008), however, reminds us that education policy globally was regarded primarily from an economic perspective. This view is supported by Rizvi and Lingard (2010:2) who maintain that market ‘ideologies framed by neoliberalism became ascendant around the world’. Fitzsimons (2000:2) describes neoliberalism as ‘a substantive discourse of governance, which is potent precisely because of its capacity to combine economics, the social, and politics, on behalf of rational choice as a principle of legitimacy’. However, Hildreth (2011) notes that, in a variety of ways, education policy has become motivated by increasingly specific and technocratic aims of academic achievement. In this regard, my thesis will argue that such an exclusively economic focus on education is too narrow, thus, meaning that the inclusion of critical social skills to enable students to serve their communities on a broader platform is therefore also important.

In fact, Akoojee and McGrath (2008) support Viljoen and Van der Walt’s (2003) claim that skills development places the importance of education and training at the forefront of policy. This realisation became a key issue when South Africa emerged from apartheid’s stranglehold via a democratic election process. Not only did it have to address the immense inequalities inherited from apartheid, it also had to face the reality of globalisation. In this regard, as post-1994 South Africa became re-absorbed into the global political framework, it had taken on some of the global agendas as well. This action allegedly led to the replacement of the welfare-related Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) with the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. Christie’s (2006:378) response was to call it ‘an unabashedly neoliberal macroeconomic programme of deregulation, privatisation and fiscal restraint [in spending]’. Indeed, this strategy’s primary goal was macroeconomic stabilisation, that is, to address the pressing economic growth, employment and redistribution issues (McCord, 2003).

In fact, Akoojee and McGrath (2003) noted that critical writers began to probe (question) the abandonment of the RDP for that of GEAR strategy. This line of thinking links to Marginson’s (1993) claim that educational policies are matters of broad public interest, subject to open debate on education in the press and on radio. Indeed, McGrath (1993:7) notes that ‘efficiency in education has come under considerable scrutiny from the public media and private sector in the past years’. This kind of reasoning relates to Burns and Carson’s (2005:283) argument that ‘institutional crises evoke particular “educational” discourses where some of these discourses are formulated in terms of the conceptions, values and principles

of the prevailing institutional paradigm (pattern)'. In this regard, Ball (2006) refers to discourses as being what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak and with what authority.

Such critical educational discourses may include, for example, in the South African context, references to desired or academic performances or other types of normative action that are aimed at goal achievements. For example, neoliberal-inspired policy initiatives that were implemented by government directed how things should be done in order to conform to the demands of the new democratic order in education. However, education is perhaps, according to Zambeta (2000), one of the least flexible state apparatuses that reflect tradition and resistance to change. This viewpoint is supported by Birnbaum (1988) who maintains that educational institutions are, by nature, cumbersome bureaucracies and that they are slow to respond, rigid and wasteful. Hence, Zambeta's (2000) cautioning that the ways in which educational institutions respond to socio-economic and political change do not follow any specific pattern. Instead, they are slow to respond to efforts of transformation, which is a characteristic that I shall address in subsequent chapters.

Jansen (2002a) holds that the adoption of GEAR was linked to improvements in the quality of schooling available, especially for the poor, and greater flow of learners² through secondary and tertiary education. South Africans have been sensitised to the prevailing inequalities and social injustices in our education system through protracted public educational discourses in newspapers and academic articles. A popular example of these public discourses can be read in newspaper articles written by Ramphela (2009). On this issue, Walker (2012:384) rightfully argues that 'we live in a "changing" world of considerable inequality and this affects all of us directly or indirectly'. In this regard, Burns and Carson (2005:283) posit that 'critics, for example, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), may propose alternatives that break with the prevailing arrangements and their particular norms, social relationships and assumptions'.

Being a business school graduate, I was educated to favour a business approach to public education with the focus on the bottom line, in this case, desired education outputs as were recorded in the actual improvements made in recorded throughput and graduation rates. With regard to the throughput rates, Sheppard and Sheppard (2012: 94) describe this concept as the percentage of students who entered a programme (at TVET colleges) and successfully completed it in the minimum prescribed time for the programme. These statistical rates of improvement that I refer to were only possible if a strict regime that advocated compliance to prescribed efficiency, accountability and performance targets was

² I shall use the term 'learner' to refer to the general grouping, and the term 'student' to refer specifically to learners in TVET colleges.

followed. However, my lived experiences as an educator and skills facilitator at the former Protea Technical College (now a campus of Northlink College after the college mergers that took place 13 years ago) challenged this perception. I am referring to the gap that existed between what skilled tasks educators were assigned to do at TVET colleges and which they were supposedly skilled to perform. In this regard, Wedekind (2008:352) argues that 'there is limited research available that provides a nuanced view into the colleges, what makes them function or not function'.

I was torn between the application of business principles that are taught at business schools that I believed in and supported, in educational practices, in light of my experiences as an educator. However, my experiences as a lecturer at teacher training colleges, that is, at the Bellville and Wesley Colleges of Education and at some schools where I served, before joining Protea College in 1996, have shown a lack of accountability and performativity. Government's interpretation of these two notions is the following: first, accountability as reflected in the Gazette (RSA, 1997:14) notes that 'the principle of public accountability bears upon decision-making, the spending of funds and the achievement of results'. Second, Ball (2000:1) regards 'performativity as a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation, or a system of "terror" in Lyotard's words, that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change'.

As a visiting lecturer at Protea College, I was privileged first to be nurtured in the practices of a quality control/assurance technician in the private sector and was fortunate to be employed in the capacity of assessing college of education students. However, only at the campus of Protea College, now Northlink College, was I tasked with establishing a 'quality awareness culture' or should I rather say a 'quality awareness'. Being in this position, I had to face, among others, the challenge of persuading a reluctant college staff to buy into a quality educational discourse at the college, which actually was instrumental in shaping or forming my understanding and appreciation for the need to pursue efficiency targets in all the college's processes and programmes.

With regard to the notion of efficiency, McGrath (1993) notes that conceptually, efficiency refers to outputs in relation to inputs. It is however, Nkomo, Akoojee and Motlhanke's (2007) interpretation of the term efficiency, from a broader theoretical viewpoint, supported by appropriate practical examples drawn from educational discourses that will be used for explanation purposes throughout this thesis. Nkomo *et al* (2007) argue that efficiency means the absolute absence of any interference by any entity, including the state, in the objective of gaining the most (educational) with the least (available) resources. However, efficiency is not solely to be interpreted from an economic, marketised point of view, I am referring here to its interpretation as social efficiency. According to Lefebvre and Vietorisz (2007) social efficiency does not refer to markets alone or to the government alone, or for that matter to civil society

alone. It only makes sense when it is applied to the social, economic, political and cultural system as a whole.

My discomfort however, was specifically directed by the manner in which policy changes were introduced and monitored at TVET colleges. Olssen, Codd and O'Neill (2004) contend that these changes go to a far deeper level than can be accounted for at the institutional level. Indeed, such changes have taken place within the very discourses that shape our understanding of education as a field of social practice within the public domain. As Rose (2009: 29) explains: '[p]ublic discourse, heard frequently enough and over time, affects the way we think, vote and lead our lives'. In fact, people's concerns that were entrenched in discourses may have galvanised them into public action, for example the payment of exorbitant study fees at higher education institutions. This action relates to Olssen *et al.*'s (2004) argument that the ascendancy of market-liberal discourses in the 1980s and 1990s has seen a major shift in the policy discourses of education as its implementation initiated the protracted discourse in social justice practices at TVET colleges.

With regard to the notion social justice, Robinson's (2016:1) brief description will suffice as a working definition throughout this thesis, from an operational point of view, that social justice means '... promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity'. This interpretation of the term, social justice, will apply throughout this study, in so far as it concerns the educational related matters affecting students' disposition, as is reflected in discourse, such as access to TVET colleges. However, Jones (2009) notes that the neoliberal tendency to blend the economic and social domains fundamentally changes the operation of traditional state services and individual behaviour. Hence, Ball's (2008) observation that the social and economic purposes of education have been collapsed into a single, overriding emphasis on policy-making for competitiveness, which, as a viewpoint, my dissertation will argue, has resulted in side-lining the social justice purposes of education.

Nkomo, Akoojee and Motlhanke (2007), for example, argued that the tension between equality of access and efficiency imperatives in government policy has triggered suggestions, that government should make tough political decisions if it wants to spread its limited financial resources to as many students as possible. This perception probably added to the newly-elected ANC government's challenges, which were already burdened by reformist commitments and facing a daunting task after the 1994 democratic elections to deliver on its promises (Young, 2001). I refer specifically to two goals, which were reflected in its 1994 Election Manifesto, that state that an ANC government will:

- (i) Introduce one education system that provides ten years of free and compulsory education for all children;
- (ii) Assist youths who have been unable to complete their education.

According to Akoojee, Gewer and McGrath's (2005:99) thinking, the ANC's focus was motivated by the fact that 'South Africa's social, economic and political development pathways have been perversely shaped by policies that built divisions within the country and which advantaged whites both educationally and economically at the expense of other population groups'. Hence, the speed and urgency of the political transformation in South Africa which had, according to Young (2001:17), led to 'idealism confronted with reality'. This urgency to deliver on their 1994 Election Manifesto promises, led the ANC in setting too optimistic timeframes on delivery, and has therefore been compromised by the non-availability of the required resources, structures and systems.

Nevertheless, I believe that these two goals, in the 1994 Election Manifesto, had far-reaching consequences in how education should be organised in the new democratically-aligned institutions of learning. For example, Gewer (2001:133) argues that 'at the heart of TVET policy implementation is the push to transform public TVET colleges to become key drivers of the [education] system'. Hence, Sheppard and Ntenga's (2013) note, that the Further Education and Training Act (South Africa, 1998b) meant that all learning and training programmes would lead to a qualification from levels 2 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). That is, as contemplated in the National Qualifications Authority Act (South Africa, 1995). One may therefore question the rationale of having TVET colleges established to act as centres to skilling and re-skilling of our youth, as is often repeatedly emphasised, to provide intermediate (for example, artisans') skills (Akoojee & McGrath, 2008).

1.3. Rationale for the study

Arndt (1929:17) holds that 'when we experience something, we act upon it, we do something with it; and then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return'. In this regard, we use our past experiences to construct new and allegedly better ones in the future (Arndt, 1929). In other words, Arndt argues (1929:18) that 'experience as trying involves change, but change is meaningless transition unless it is consciously connected with the wave of consequences which flow from it'. In other words, when the political change (regime change) is reflected back into the change made in us, that is our understanding, our expectations of desired action South Africans deem necessary in dealing with the educational challenges facing the nation.

Indeed, these perceptions, I argue, are what one can expect in a democratic South Africa, where the general public's expectations have most probably been heightened by the democratisation of public life in general. However, the seriousness of government to address the education situation is clearly articulated in the White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995:1) as follows:

Our message is that education and training must change. It cannot be business as usual in our schools, colleges, technikons and universities. The national project of reconstruction and development compels everyone in education and training to accept the challenge of creating a system which cultivates and liberates the talents of all our people without exception.

This perception that education must change and people must accept it, as described in the extract, was indeed evident from the government's action at the outset of its tenure with its intention to promote TVET colleges. Indeed, this conclusion is clear, that is, according to White Paper 4, Programme for the Transformation of Further Education and Training (RSA, 1998a:10).

This viewpoint, I argue, links to the ministry's (RSA, 1998a) desire for vocational education and training to be planned and coordinated as a comprehensive, interlocking sector that provides meaningful educational experiences to learners at the post-compulsory phase. That is, I argue, if the TVET colleges were to play a pivotal role in providing the expertise to address the critical skills shortages of South Africa's workforce that it was identified to do, it must be provided with the required resources such as human, capital and material, that would allow them to deliver on what they are mandated to do. Thus, by having a highly competent, committed staff and the right infrastructure and finances, these institutions will be enabled to deliver graduates of the quality and quantities that the state requires. However, our education system continues to experience pedagogical problems in delivering quality graduates, in addition to the problematic low numbers that are graduating at these institutions.

Insufficiently skilled workers, in addition to the poor employment of TVET graduates, with questionable academic achievements, bode ill for our national interest in terms of South Africa's global competitiveness. In this regard, Maree (1990) is cited in Kane-Berman (1991:6) arguing about 'a mismatch between the output of the education system and the skills required by the market'. In other words, there's an imbalance between the skills produced by public institutions and the demands of the job market. Even though Pusser and Doane (2001) conceded in Martinez and Richardson (2003) that the term, market, is ubiquitous indeed, some scholars (for example, Williams, 1995; Richardson, Reeves-Bracco, Callan & Finney, 1999) even refer to it in the context of how state policy influences and interacts with higher education institutions. Kadlec (2006) holds that Dewey regards education as a process that does not prepare us for anything, but that it is rather the process by which we 'grow' and develop as self-directing human beings that are capable of recognising the consequences of our actions that could result in unemployment. In other words, we are supposedly in a learning process by doing, and, according to Kadlec (2006), we become capable of effecting change toward the betterment of our collective existence.

This is a socio-economic problem, which this study intends to explore via a pragmatic approach, which Kadlec (2006) describes as being problem-driven. In this regard, Kalolo (2015) identifies pragmatism as a practical approach to finding solutions for existing problems and issues. This will enable us to assess the government's decision to follow a neoliberal market-oriented/directed approach in transforming education into an efficient and effective department within a democratic political dispensation. Another contributory factor could have been the economic recession that existed during the early 1990s. This has in particular, according to Akoojee and McGrath (2003:6) '...tended to conflate the effects of the new-found freedom with economic subjugation'. The Department of Higher Education and Training's White Paper (RSA, 2013:2) aptly describes our situation in that '[i]t is not only the education and training system that has changed, but also the social and economic challenges facing South Africa have also changed'.

Indeed, the national priorities today are seen somewhat differently by government, compared to the earlier years of democratic rule (RSA, 2013). This new line of thinking may probably explain the strong government emphasis, according to Greenstein (1995), on being more responsive to global challenges in the industrial and service sectors of the economy. In this regard, the reshaping of the TVET sector necessitated a serious commitment from government to increase investment in the general education component of vocational training (Greenstein, 1995) which links with Nicholson's claim, as interpreted in Malachowski (2013), that education needs to be steered in a way that will not only accommodate the educational needs of the student, but also that which will meet the demands of the economy. I am referring here to the consequences or the results of the actions that we have taken.

Therefore, this study will explore verifiable evidence pertaining to educational surveys, official reports and/or academic debates that confirm or deny that business-related changes to educational processes or programmes actually serve the best interests of TVET students and honour their rights. Preferably, the state should be responsible for preventing situations where the students' basic rights to a good education as is enshrined in our Constitution, are violated. In this regard, the purpose and mission of TVET colleges, therefore, is 'to respond to the human resource needs of our country for personal, social, civic and economic development' (RSA, 1998a: 14). The outcomes of such processes therefore need to be verified by reliable evidence, such as verifiable pass and graduation rates at colleges, and not the rhetoric that some officials may announce at certain politically-related events.

In this regard, Greenstein (1995) refers to the White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995) that identified numerous problems in the education system. Among these, argues Greenstein (1995:200), were 'disparities in facilities, resources and quality of provision', which have resulted '...in huge inequalities in skills and competences in the nation's labour force'. This line of thinking is in accord with the White Paper's reference to the education

system's inability to facilitate the progression of young people from school to other learning or employment activities. Broadly speaking, education should primarily serve human capital development, which would then include, among others, opportunities for students to develop their social and interpersonal skills needed to actively participate in a democratic society. My thesis will therefore need to unpack the reason(s) why the 21st century skills philosophy of education is an economic one, meaning that its primary goal is to create efficient and effective workers (Rose, 2009:2).

Walker (2012:387) however, cautions that 'if we are indifferent to the more expansive aims of education – the cultural, moral and intellectual – we will impoverish ourselves'. I support such a viewpoint, because I believe that it will actually serve the best interests of the nation if the South African youth is to receive a more holistic education. That is an educational approach that will familiarise them with such moral values as honesty, loyalty, self-discipline and so forth. More, importantly, this knowledge will serve them (students) well in the wake of the high South African crime rate among the youth, or should I say, unemployed youth. Hence, Moser's (2000:2) note that a good education is supposed to provide the basis for a healthy, stable and successful (democratic) society. In fact, Moser (2000) argues that colleges, in particular, are the sites for the learning and skilling of our youth by preparing them to serve the nation and their communities.

In this regard, Arndt (1929) cautions, following Dewey's thinking, that there is considerable danger of a narrow outlook on vocational education today, this relates, in a sense, to what Agabi (2012) claims, that vocational education is education that equips the learner with specific practical skills in a particular field. Examples include skills acquired in specific programmes, such as in carpentry, tailoring and so forth, which confirm what Dewey is concerned about, that is, a narrow, focused training. Hence Agabi's (2012) further cautioning that the emphasis on mere technical proficiency without insight into the intellectual content of the industries tends to make the schools, in this case colleges, an adjunct to the industries. Thus, the question of whether we should train people to fit into the present industrial system as docile wage slaves is raised, or whether we should seek to develop initiative and creative ability.

Indeed, Badat and Sayed (2014) rightfully argue that a holistic public education is crucial for establishing ideas of social justice practices in and through education. Leistyna (2009) holds that social justice has no fixed definition. Nevertheless, Boyles, Carusi and Attick (2009) posit that that social justice in education indicates that educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities) and society are, and always have been, replete with injustice. This is, they argue, a necessary condition for the formation of the intellectual and other capabilities of individuals, such as their functioning as economic and social people. Therefore, the question

to respond to is what a good quality education supposes to be, given South Africa's fairly recent (since 1994) introduction to a neoliberal-inspired work ethic.

Perhaps a more important question would then be whether all students at, say, TVET colleges are at the receiving end of a good education? In answering this question, one needs to be clear that students that are attending colleges are from different economic and socio-cultural backgrounds, as well as having different learning experiences. Therefore, in formulating suitable research question(s), one has to remember the key influences of efficiency and social justice that sustain education discourses. With regard to the notion of efficiency, on the one hand, the European Commission's (2007) publication regards efficiency as the relation between input and output, with the objective of maximising output for a given input or minimizing inputs for a given output.

1.4. Formulating the research question

In this section, I shall explain my selection of a suitable research question that will not only motivate, but also steer my research, via a format that will take this study to its conclusion. I shall therefore support Dewey's (1923: 64) viewpoint, that 'the future having no stimulating and directing power when severed from the possibilities of the present, something must be hitched on to it to make it work'. In this case we use our past experiences to construct new and better ones in the future (Arndt, 1929). This viewpoint is probably raised when neoliberals presuppose that economic competitiveness requires that schools or TVET colleges and educators be held accountable for educating students to become productive workers. Arndt (1929), however, also notes that individuals undoubtedly differ widely in their ability to learn from past experiences.

This line of thinking, on the one hand, would probably explain why the neoliberal thrust in education policies and practices has been criticised by scholars such as Jansen (2002a), Ball (2003), and Giroux (2004). A probable reason for such criticism may be related to Jones' (2009:51) claim that 'education becomes less an opportunity for students to develop the social and interpersonal skills needed to participate in a democratic society...' Rizvi and Lingard (2010:2-5), on the other hand, argue that 'it is through policies that government seeks to reform the educational systems'. In this regard, Hursh (2009:1) holds that the main criticism is that market-oriented educational policies and their respective discourses have not achieved the economic and social benefits that were supposedly claimed for the market to function as a self-regulating system. These thoughts link to with Akoojee and McGrath's (2004:42) warning that 'while there is a need to undo the "inequality" of the past, some of the new practices are likely to reinforce it'. Indeed, some of the supposed beneficiaries might be negatively influenced by the measure(s) that government has taken. For example,

sometimes improved enrolments will take place at the expense of other crucial aspects of education delivery such as the quality of its outcomes and equity in funding.

In this regard, the growing numbers at, say, TVET colleges will be increasing the pressure on the limited available educational resources at these institutions to sustain education and training programmes. One may therefore question the constitutionality of enforcing market-oriented policies in educational practices. It is this interpretation of market-directed policies that I will use in this study, where enforcement of policy directives could actually lead to compromising academic performances at colleges, and, consequently, negatively influence the students' constitutional rights to a quality education. For example, Christie (2003:7) argues that 'improvements are certainly in evidence, but conditions in the poorest and the most marginalised communities and their schools have proved slow to change'. I will therefore argue that, in certain cases, this argument will have relevance at the colleges in the townships. I therefore contend that Davis (2007) rightly argues that the moral purpose of educators is also to serve the interests of their students.

One may therefore argue that the pedagogical aim of educators is probably, according to Davis (2007), influenced by government's pursuit of efficiency in government departments and the politics of the consumer. I refer here specifically to claims made by TVET colleges regarding their achievements, conceptualised since the prestige associated with achievement creates the likelihood of exaggeration and may lead to the establishment of false perceptions of excellence in the minds of the community. Therefore, after considering the issues that I have raised in the preceding sections, I was confronted with one issue, which was to become the main research question of this study:

1. Does the pursuit of efficiency targets at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges via market-oriented education policies actually promote the execution and/or the sustainability of social justice practices at these institutions?

In order to explore this main question, I shall also have to explore two related subsidiary-questions that will hopefully unravel the education circumstances at TVET colleges that could influence their operational performance:

2. How do educational discourses that are aimed at achieving efficiency inform the practices of TVET colleges?
3. How do social justice-orientated educational discourses at TVET colleges inform the practices at these colleges?

I however, also found it necessary to add a third sub-question that will tighten or improve the coherence level of this thesis by questioning the nature of the relationship(s) that may exist

between an efficiency and social justice focus at TVET colleges in the execution of collegial processes.

4. How does the relationship between an efficiency and social justice play out in TVET colleges in respect of informing their educational practices and achievements?

To respond to these questions, I shall have to provide reliable evidence of systemic educational performances that will either confirm or refute what these research questions wish to explore. In this regard, only verifiable facts or evidence will suffice regarding the practical implications that the key notions of efficiency and social justice conceptually contribute towards shaping educational practices at TVET colleges. In subsequent chapters these two terms should be interpreted at (i) a conceptual perspective; thereafter, for greater clarity, (ii) I shall draw practical examples from appropriate educational discourses (see chapter 2). Although the two terms are perceived differently at the conceptual level, they are, in fact, mutually dependent at the practical level. Even though they are on different ends of the same educational continuum, you cannot practically solve the one, say efficiency demands, without solving the social justice challenges at TVET colleges.

The major concern throughout this thesis is therefore focussed on the practical implications, that is, the success or failure of market-oriented policies, of solving efficiency and social justice challenges in the actual practices at TVET colleges. However, Biesta and Burbules (2003:109) contend that 'in some ways, the most important conclusion that follows from a pragmatist [action-oriented approach] understanding of educational research is that educational research is not only about finding better, more sophisticated, more efficient, or effective means for achieving educational ends...'. In other words, I also have to find the most suitable methodology that will enable me to respond to the research question(s).

1.5. Research methodology

When contemplating research, Boland (2013) suggests that the task is to review the methodologies, which may be quantitative and/or qualitative, and then to select the one(s) that best fit(s) the research project. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) concur and argue that 'the type of methodology selected by any researcher depends on the central research objective and questions' which should direct the type of methodology to be selected. This view is shared by Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2006) who argue that research methodology is a systematic way to solve a particular problem. For example, the education policy formulation of the period (circa 1998) turned out to be problematic insofar as it did not solve the educational situation, for which it was designed at the time, at TVET colleges.

However, as it turns out, it is these same policy issues that we are currently wrestling with at TVET colleges that need to be resolved.

A resolution is now possible because we are in a position to assess the success or failure of the said market-oriented education policies. It is therefore essential that the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena are revealed. This methodology should therefore enable the researcher to uncover or establish what the operational significance in targeting efficiency and social justice practices at, say, TVET colleges is. In other words, I shall have to investigate what the motivation and consequences will be from an educational perspective, in targeting these goals in education practices.

I therefore believe that conceptual clarification of the key concepts that are reflected in the research questions, especially how they relate to one another and their respective influences in shaping educational practices, have to be conducted. Lenski (2010), in particular, notes that conceptual clarifications are one of the main concerns of philosophy, and this study will therefore have to contribute to a better understanding on the concepts of neoliberalism, efficiency, effectiveness, social justice and discourse as they relate to specific issues in Higher Education practices.

However, my aim in this study is not, as Lenski (2010) argues, to contribute to a general clarification of the concepts, but to present a much deeper philosophical understanding, which probably could lead to further research. Therefore, my decision to conduct this study will be by following a Conceptual Investigation as a methodology to steer this study's development. I am referring to an investigation of the concepts, as Jabareen (2009) argues, of how they are related, for example in discourses, whether they are interlinked to other concepts. In fact, Jabareen (2009) holds that these concepts together provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon that is being investigated. However, my approach in exploring and analysing public and academic educational discourses that relate to efficiency and social justice practices, and other concepts that were mentioned in the previous paragraph, will be chiefly conducted via a pragmatist approach throughout this study.

In this regard, will I follow Kalolo's (2015) advice of a pragmatic perspective guide to link educational theories to practice, to solve educational challenges in their contextual setting, and bring the relevance and functionality of technical vocational education and training colleges (TVET colleges) to the public. However, my pragmatic approach in conducting this research on the discourses (debates, opinions, discussions) also allows me to be vigilant against any unjust policies action. Such a perception can be symbolised by the analogy of a hand in the glove fit, according to Poetschke (2003). Here, on the one hand, the 'hand'

symbolises the policy actions that would compel educators and/or institutions to adhere to policy directives to pursue efficiency practices. On the other hand, the 'glove' will symbolise the protection, in other words, the justice that is associated with the policy action. In other words, it is not only what is actually achievable from a pragmatic point of view in terms of the educational goals, but also the how, in terms of the quality and justice in the execution of policy, that is important from a critical perspective.

In this regard, Delputte (2013) holds that the function of pragmatism is not to critique, but to help in a workable course of action. However, given the conceptual and theoretical nature of my study, I shall therefore have to draw on the following, as probable sources of public and academic opinions, criticisms or discussions. In particular, the foci would be on efficiency and social justice issues in educational practices which I will now briefly explain. However, a more detailed discussion will follow in Chapter 2.

1.6. Sources of educational discourse

In this section I will briefly outline the different sources in which educational discourses are raised with regard to the key concepts efficiency and social justice as practices at TVET colleges. These sources will include:

(i) Document Research

I am referring here to documentation that includes, inter alia: official government policy documents; ministerial speeches; and research and report publications by authoritative institutions, for example, HSRC, which will enable me to access government's intent with respect to specific educational matters.

(ii) Academic literature

Adams; Khan; Raeside and White (2007:61) argue that 'the safest sources of material for research purposes are academic journals and the websites of academic departments'. They argue that the author's own academic credibility is usually sufficient to ensure that this material is of a high standard. However, these sources of information, such as academic publications in authoritative journals and books authored by noted writers or institutions, generally also provide a critical perspective of particular current issues or topics of interest.

(iii) Printed news media articles

Marginson (1993:23) argues that education is a highly politicised sector and that educational policies are matters of broad public interest, which possibly explains the strong participation of noted academic scholars in educational discourses in the press, on radio and television, on issues that are in the public interest. After having provided the "how" I plan to proceed to

engage research question via Conceptual Investigation as a methodology. I will now set out “what” will be argued in subsequent chapters.

1.7. Outline of chapters

This study will proceed to explore the research question via the following chapter outline, in order to explore in each chapter the responses that were raised with regard to the main research questions.

Chapter 1 Orientation to the research

In this opening chapter, I orientate the reader towards the exploration of the main research question with respect to the socio-political and economic challenges that existed in the TVET college sector post-1994. The research questions were formulated and the selection of a conceptual investigation, as a methodology for conducting this study, was introduced and motivated.

Chapter 2 Research design and methodology

This chapter’s primary focus is to explain my research design and methodology, which is how I intend to conduct this study, in response to the research questions. That said, I shall also explore my position as educator and researcher, because these roles shape my beliefs with regard to the practice of public education. I shall therefore declare my ontological, epistemological and methodological positions for both my reader and myself, because these positions will shape how I manage this research study. Furthermore, it will guide my analysis and interpretations of policy issues affecting the efficient execution of educational programmes and social justice practices at TVET colleges.

Chapter 3 The efficiency discourse in educational policy practices at TVET colleges

In this chapter, I explore the efficiency discourse by engaging the educational policy practices in order to explore the research question; in particular, students’ performance in terms of government’s desired expectations. In order to do that, the concept of efficiency is unpacked, in its various forms, for example, internal, external and educational efficiency, as well as how it justifies the use of market-directed policies to enforce and/or direct government’s GEAR strategy for education delivery. In this regard, the key notion of neoliberalism, and its influences in shaping educational practices through such policy measures as accountability, performativity and managerialism practices, are also explored.

Chapter 4 An educational perspective on social justice at TVET colleges

In Chapter 3 the focus was to familiarise the reader with the conceptual, theoretical and practical issues with the notion of efficiency within a neoliberal framework. In this chapter I shall explore the conceptual issue of social justice from an educational perspective. In this

regard, I shall explore the various key social components of social justice in terms of how educational practices are conducted at TVET colleges in response to the main research question. For example, issues in educational practices pertaining to equality, equity, redress and access will be unpacked.

In this regard Robinson (2016:1) defines social justice as ‘... promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity’. According to Robinson (2016), it exists when people share a common humanity, possess inalienable rights to equitable treatment, and support for their human rights. I shall therefore have to explore how social justice practices at TVET colleges are being promoted. In particular, I shall explore the government’s attempts to redress the immense deprivation of students’ rights to a decent education and training that occurred during the apartheid years, especially among the black majority.

Chapter 5 Market-directed policies at TVET colleges

This chapter’s primary focus is directed at the key market-directed policies that government employs to direct the execution of TVET colleges’ programmes and processes to achieve the efficiency and social justice goals as is reflected in the main research question. Attention is specifically drawn to the nature and purpose of these policies and what they are supposed to achieve at TVET colleges in the ANC-led government’s attempt to transform the further education and training sector into efficiently run TVET institutions that adhere to the social justice challenges in the TVET sector. Particular attention is paid to the government’s initiatives that were launched to address the skills challenges that adversely influence or promote students’ employment prospects.

Chapter 6 Tensions between market-oriented policies and the promotion of social justice practices at FET colleges

In this final chapter, the main themes of the previous chapters that were raised with respect to efficiency and social justice practices at TVET colleges are brought together. In this chapter, the focus will be to analyse and interpret the actual evidence that were obtained from official and other surveys that were conducted at TVET colleges. From the trends of the captured data, conclusions will be drawn to decide whether actual improvements in efficiency and social justice practices were experienced at TVET colleges, in response to the government’s interventions via the programmes engaging issues of equality, equity, quality and redress challenges. Thereafter, the study will respond to the research questions.

1.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I engaged with the circumstances that led to Chisholm (1997) claiming that apartheid had bequeathed an enormous legacy of educational inequality. This perception links to Palmer and De Klerk’s (2011) note that the establishment of the new political

dispensation in South Africa has placed emphasis on the introduction of educational policies and mechanisms aimed at redressing the legacy of a dysfunctional and unequal education system. However, the implementation of these policies has led to consequences which are not conducive to student development, particularly among the disadvantaged communities.

These perceptions were then formulated into the main research question, in which this key conceptual relationship has to be investigated. This is, does the pursuit of efficiency targets at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges via market-oriented education policies actually promote the execution and/or the sustainability of social justice practices at these institutions?'. The South African government had to face the two basic policy choices, namely economic efficiency and social justice, which are perceived to be conceptually different, but are related in practice. This motivation served as the reason behind the decision to follow a conceptual investigation as the methodology to steer this study to its conclusion. In the following chapter, the philosophical conceptual framework will be discussed through a pragmatic and, to a lesser extent, a critical approach, which will steer the development of this study to respond to the research questions appropriately.

Chapter 2

Theoretical perspectives and research methodology

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I engaged key concepts such as efficiency and social justice and explored government's motivation for utilising market-oriented policies in educational practices as is reflected in the main research question. However, as I argued, our education system continues to experience pedagogical problems in delivering quality graduates. I decided to use a pragmatic, philosophical, conceptual investigative approach to explore the wisdom of government's decision to use a neoliberal policy approach in the transformation of education into an efficient and effective department. Therefore, the primary focus in this chapter is to unpack the theory involved, with which I intend to conduct this study, by using a conceptual investigation as a methodology, as referred to in section 1.5. This will allow me to explore the research questions (section 1.4) of this study 'Does the pursuit of efficiency targets at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges via market-oriented education policies actually promote the execution and/or the sustainability of social justice practices at these institutions?'.

I will also draw on both critical theory and pragmatism, in particular, to unpack the public and academic interests in education delivery. Ball (1995:9), in particular, holds that 'there is always room for critically examining ends in a pragmatic evaluation, but this is done when it will contribute to the practical goal of determining the best policy choice'. In this regard, I shall examine the conceptualisation of education policy discourse and its influence, via the pursuit of efficiency and social justice practices at TVET colleges in the following section

2.2. Dewey's pragmatism, discourses and power relations at TVET colleges

In this section I shall explore, as I said in the previous section, the key notions: pragmatism, critical theory, discourses and power that will have a major influence on shaping how I shall respond to answering the research questions as is reflected in section 1.4.

2.2.1. Dewey's pragmatism at TVET colleges

Biesta and Burbules' (2003) holds that for pragmatism, the crucial question always has to do with what might follow when we act in a specific way. However, before I do so, I need to refer to Kalolo's (2015:155) claim that Rosenthal and Thayer (2011), and Singh (2007) posit that 'the term pragmatism is derived from the Greek word pragma [meaning deed, work or act] which is a derivative of the word prassō, meaning to pass over, to practice, and/or to

achieve'. Furthermore, Kalolo also notes that the etymological meaning identifies pragmatism as a practical action-oriented approach to finding solutions for existing problems and issues. In this regard, pragmatism signifies practicality, compromise, prudence and a clear goal orientation in dealing with problems.

My decision to follow Dewey's pragmatist approach, as I argued in Chapter 1, was incidentally motivated by Kalolo's (2015) explanation that a pragmatic perspective is regarded as an interventional approach that is likely to guide what should be done to produce successful educational research outcomes. That's the first part, whereas the second part touches on exploring what kind of academic outcomes are actually produced. For example, how are disadvantaged students, educators and education in general influenced? In this regard, the relevance of Foucault's work with regard to engaging specific social issues is clearly in evidence. I am referring here to Foucault's (1979:59-60) argument that 'as far as we go in the social network [college community], we always find power as something which "runs through" it, that acts, that brings effects'.

Indeed, this perception probably explains why Foucault turned towards pragmatic ethics to supplement his theories of knowledge and power as the basis of subjectivity (Zack, 2008). In this regard, Zack (2008) holds that Reynolds (2004) finds parallel claims of Foucault and Dewey, which are primarily in the areas of ethics. For example, Reynolds (2004) found that neither Dewey nor Foucault subscribed to an ultimate moral stand in regard to fixed ethical positions. In fact, ethics is employed as a tool of critique. Furthermore, both advocate testing the limits of experience through enquiry (critique) and both reject foundationalism (to be discussed later in this chapter). Indeed, these issues that Reynolds (2004) and Foucault (1979) have touched on, have relevance in the following example. I am referring here to my reference, in the conclusion of Chapter 1, to the ANC government's urge to set too optimistic time periods for delivery, which have been compromised by the non-availability of the required resources. Indeed, this outcome negatively impacted on the ANC government's reformist commitments, made prior to the 1994 elections, to deliver on election promises.

These promises included the social improvement of education and, more specifically, the creation of employment opportunities, which created circumstances that led to tense situations. In fact, this outcome placed them in a situation which Dewey (1921:163) holds in which an 'amoral situation is one in which judgment and choice are required antecedently to overt action'. In this regard, allocations are supposed to be made from the limited available financial resources to produce improved quality education for all, which is in conflict with other national pressing needs. However, from a pragmatic perspective, Delputte (2013) argues that the function of pragmatism is not to critique, but to help find a workable course of action within a context where those involved are not neutral to the process but directly engaged in the discussion. This situation could probably have contributed to what Kadlec

(2007) refers to as the long-standing hostility of critical theorists towards pragmatism. That is, of course, in addition to critical theorists' discomfort with Dewey's uncompromising rejection of all forms of transcendental absolutism and all appeals to fixed, timeless foundations. In fact, Kalolo (2015) notes that Singh (2007) claims that pragmatism does not believe in fixed or rigid aims of educational research, because human needs always change with changing times, places and circumstances.

Indeed, these viewpoints are aptly captured in Kadlec's (2006:519) reasoning that 'the historical relationship between pragmatism and critical theory is one in which the antifoundational [adaptable] and practice-oriented dimensions of pragmatism appear to exist in tension, if not outright conflict'. Having said that, Kadlec (2006:520) argues that 'the philosophical underpinnings of Dewey's pragmatism form the core of an enterprise which is both antifoundational and critical'. This suggestion opens a model called 'critical pragmatism', which is a term that Dewey himself never used (Kadlec, 2007). From Dewey's critical pragmatism perspective, anti-foundationalism is regarded as being flexible or adaptable in thinking, meaning that one is able to cultivate one's critical positions on philosophy, pedagogy and politics (Kadlec, 2006). Zack (2008) holds that critical pragmatism has not been widely used as a philosophical term and can certainly not claim to be a movement or school. Furthermore, critical pragmatism suggests, at the very least, the interplay of an action-oriented, practice-based approach with an approach that is concerned with an analysis of structural issues and of power in planning.

However, for critical pragmatists such as Dewey, Kadlec (2006:541) posits, 'the point of reflective inquiry is not to generate final principles [that is, fixed principles], but rather to improve our capacity for tapping into the critical potential of lived experience[s] in a [changing educational] world defined by flux and change'. In this regard, I draw on Dewey's (1923:164) claim that 'to learn from experience is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequences'. Indeed, the political, social and economic challenges that we face, argues Kadlec (2006), require that we arm ourselves not with fixed absolutes, but rather aim at achieving, via an open-ended inquiry, a greater understanding of the consequences of our practices and policies. In other words, we adopt a flexible approach in how we manage issues or challenges in our daily life. Since any form of static (rigid) absolutism is not merely unnecessary for orientating genuine critical reflection, rather it seriously impedes our efforts to grapple intelligently with a changing (educational) world that is always in the making (Kadlec, 2007).

In this regard, argues Kadlec (2007:23), 'Deweyan critical pragmatism shares with the tradition of critical theory the belief that pursuit of genuinely educative experiences requires a basis from which deeply normative insights and emancipatory aims may be developed and pursued'. Indeed, Dewey (1923:90) holds that 'a genuinely educative experience, then, is

one in which instruction [to students] is conveyed and ability increased'. However, Kadlec (2007) holds that, unlike traditional theory, critical pragmatism rejects the notion that such a basis must be fixed or final outside the realm of lived experiences. Since our beliefs, opinions and perceptions that we articulate in such discourses are shaped by our lived experiences; these will therefore determine our actions (Shapiro, 1981). For example, present-day educators, at TVET colleges, and academics are modern-day people who, for the most part, are interested in fashioning the practices and theories of a modern profession. However, there are also administrators who are not necessarily interested in modernising schools or colleges. In this regard, I refer to reformers that are only interested in re-instituting traditional ideas and practices that truly are at odds with modern aspirations (Cherryholmes, 1998).

2.2.2. Discourses and power relations at TVET colleges

Palmer (2003) holds that a discourse, in Foucauldian terms, is a way of thinking and speaking about some aspect of social life. For example, the impact of neoliberally inspired policies at TVET colleges via its efficiency focus, led to the questioning of social justice practices at these institutions. I am referring here to what Akoojee, Gewer and McGrath (2005) argued in section 1.2, that the South African further education and training policy debate mirrors international debates that show a broader educational policy tension between a neoliberal discourse of college transformation and a continuing espousal of broader educational goals.

This meant that the government had to, on the one hand, consider pursuing economic goal (efficiency & growth), whereas on the other hand social welfare issues required action. In fact, these two policy objectives cannot be resolved, the one at the expense of the other, because from a practical perspective are they connected or exists side by side. For example, Olssen *et al.*'s (2004) argue that the ascendancy of market-liberal discourses in the 1980s and 1990s has seen a major shift in the policy discourses of education as the former's implementation initiated the protracted discourse on social justice practices. For example, McGrath (1993:7) notes that 'efficiency in education has come under considerable scrutiny from the public media and private sector in the past years'. This led to critical writers probing (questioning) the abandonment of the RDP for that of the GEAR strategy.

I will therefore explore educational discourses about other people's thoughts and opinions on policy issues with regard to efficiency and social justice practices at colleges, in particular, the perceptions and judgment of academics, of educators, as well as the general public who adopted a critical response against the use of market-oriented educational policies. In having said that, I am reminded of what Rose (2009) argued that public discourses, if heard frequently enough and over time, affects the way we think, vote and lead our lives. In fact, McGrath (1993) noted that efficiency in education has come under considerable scrutiny in

the public media. It is this availability of newspapers to the general public which confirms Sholar's (1994) note in Thomas (2009) that both the media and policy discourses are public discourses that create perceptions among the general public which, in turn, influence public opinion. For example, South Africans have been sensitised to the inequalities and social injustices in our education system through protracted public educational discourses in newspapers and academic articles.

Such a perspective explains Lefebver and Vietorisz's (2007) statement that governments have to be pressured by public opinion at home and abroad to introduce gradual, progressive changes in the institutions that underlie the socially inequitable functioning of the market guides to socially desirable action. However, power is, allegedly, never one-sided, since there are those who have power and others, for example, students, whom Foucault (1979) argues, (technically) do not have power, except for protest action.

I, therefore, contextualise my argument to uncover the embedded power relations that shape the discourses in educational policies in South Africa. In this regard, I draw on Foucault's (1980:103) claims that 'I still believe that the way in which power is exercised and functions in a society like ours is little understood'. Furthermore, Foucault (1980) holds that:

In a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power, which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse (Foucault, 1980:93).

Foucault's (1980) extract, on the one hand, clearly emphasises that power is exercised within, for example, public educational discourses in which they constitute and govern individual subjects at, say, TVET colleges. On the other hand, Wickham (1986) argues that power relations exist only in relation to specific educational policies and the objectives which they encompass. These policies must therefore be understood not only as formal, written policies, but can also be viewed as objects of power analysis while they are operational. In this reasoning, a link is made between power and discourse, which is relevant to this study.

To summarise, in this study, I will explore, through the dominant pragmatic lens, the endeavours of educational institutions, more particularly TVET colleges, to pursue market-oriented policies that primarily favour the pursuit of economically-related educational targets and the discourses in favour or in opposition to such practices. From a critical pragmatic perspective, the combination of lenses for both action and power are linked to the pursuit of efficiency and social justice practices in TVET colleges' programmes and processes. In this regard, Zack (2008) holds that critical theory represents an emphasis on power and pragmatism which represents a focus on the experienced world. However, in so far as it

concerns Foucault's link to critical theory within this study, the aim will be to expose the alleged unjust power consequences, as they are articulated within educational discourses (as will be discussed later). In this regard, Zack (2008) holds that critical theory is primarily a philosophy of inquiry, because it questions and challenges the seeming obviousness of the way things are. In this regard, I shall have to unpack my unique position as researcher and concerned educator with respect to this study.

2.3. My situatedness as an educator

Love (2000) asserts that the philosophically well-established areas of ontology, epistemology and methodology are foundational to research and theory-making. In this regard, Mack (2010) holds that one's ontological assumptions about reality inform one's epistemological assumptions, which inform one's methodology and these in turn will all give rise to one's methods employed in research to collect data or evidence. Mack (2010) therefore advises that how one view the constructs of one's social reality and knowledge affects how one will go about uncovering the knowledge of relationships among phenomena and social behaviour.

In effect, these perceptions about the world are embedded in the researcher and therefore cannot be changed at will. My positions, as educator and researcher, have shaped my beliefs and I am bound to my profession by my experiences in education, as I stated in section 1.2. Therefore, for the purposes of the study, it is important that I clarify my ontological, epistemological and methodological positions for both my reader and myself, because these three concepts, to which Love (2000) refers, will reflect my perception and view of education from the perspective of a concerned South African.

However, prior to unpacking my position, I shall add two factors, which Love (2000) suggests clarify the roles of ontology, epistemology and methodology. The first concern relates to the nature of the research as an activity in the public domain. In this regard, Love (2000) argues that the public aspect of research requires that descriptions of research, with their theories, concepts and terminology, be presented in a publicly, well-agreed and well-defined discourse that is chosen to be as unambiguous as possible. The second factor relates to the processes of inquiry that underpin the research. Love (2000) argues that inquiry is not useful in and by itself, but research involves directing the inquiry in a particular direction for particular purposes. In the following section, I will unpack the three concepts which Love (2000) refers to individually, but also recognising their interrelatedness.

2.3.1. The ontology of my study as an educator

In Craig's (2005:765) interpretation, the concept 'ontology' refers to a philosophical investigation of existence, or 'being'. 'Ontology' is interpreted by Van Steenberghen

(1970:39) as ‘the object of my very first experience and of every other experience later on,’ while Love (2000) regards it as the philosophical study of reality and being. The concept is derived from the Greek ‘ontos’ meaning ‘being’ and ‘logia’ meaning study. Ontology, argues Mack (2010), is the starting point which will likely lead to one’s own theoretical framework. Indeed, Grix’s (2004: 59) definition of ontology refers to the study of ‘claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists’.

However, Crotty (1998), on the one hand, advises that researchers can choose at which stage to begin their ontological, epistemological methods or methodology. On the other hand, other authors stress that research is best conducted by identifying your ontological assumptions first. According to Grix (2004:68), research is best done:

[B]y setting out clearly the relationship between what a researcher thinks can be researched (her ontological position), linking it to what we can know about it (her epistemological position) and how to go about acquiring it (her methodological approach), you can begin to comprehend the impact your ontological position can have on what and how you decide to study.

Moreover, one’s ontological assumptions inform one’s epistemological assumptions which further inform one’s methodology and these all give rise to one’s methods employed to collect data or information. In other words, if someone studies ontology, the study is what we mean when we say something exists. I use the concept ‘ontology’ to refer to my lived experiences as an educator and, more specifically, my commitment towards education and the way it shapes how I think about current educational practices. In fact, Jackson (2009:656) holds, on the one hand, that Cox (1996) argues that ‘[o]ntology lies at the beginning of any inquiry and suggests that [it is] where pragmatism holds its most profound implication’, whereas Dewey’s ontology, on the other hand, argues Kadlec (2007:23), means that ‘the only foundations appropriate to our situation must be those which are flexible enough to guide us in an ever-changing world’.

Hence, Kadlec’s (2007) suggests that these foundations should be viewed as the essential commitment to the ongoing expansion of our capacities and to the expansion of our individually shared perception of the unintended consequences of our actions. However, one of the difficulties in describing pragmatism within this framework is that pragmatism is not interpreted as a metaphysically or ontologically-driven approach to research; therefore, bringing pragmatism to reject the importance of certain components of this framework (DeForge & Shaw, 2012). Hence, by taking up a pragmatic approach to inquiry, it would mean giving up on the assumption that there is some external system that will explain our beliefs to us (DeForge & Shaw, 2012). The mistake being made in this vein by many critics is the assumption that pragmatism is in fact not based on any ontology at all, whereas it may

be more appropriate to say that pragmatism does not value inquiry into the nature of physical reality that does not have any consequences for human life (DeForge & Shaw, 2012).

Pragmatism has, thus, a metaphysical implication, which, according to Kadlec (2007), supports the value of consequences which leads us to take the future into consideration. Taking the future into consideration, leads us to the conception of a universe whose evolution is not finished; of a universe which is still in the making or in the process of becoming. This focus, argues Kadlec (2007), opposes the idea that the chief purpose of metaphysical claims is to provide a safe haven of fixity (principles) that cannot be unmade by a world in perpetual motion. This is clearly not so, because in a world that is defined by ceaseless (dynamic) changes, we are less in need of fixed principles than we need flexible (adaptable) habits of inquiry and a taste for imaginative approaches to social intelligence that will increase our capacity to perceive the consequences of our actions.

Therefore, one may argue, the ontological assumptions of pragmatist philosophy tend not to doubt the existence of physical reality, but tend to see the utility of ontological discussions more or less ending at the recognition that we have experiences (DeForge & Shaw, 2012). This line of thinking links to my lived educational experiences in which I strongly oppose the direction education is headed, especially when newspapers use headlines such as 'not the education we fought for' (Mkuma, 2010) or educators can't cope as stress levels soar to capture attention (Keating, 2007). In having said that, my living world as an educator also influences my position as researcher who seeks answers to a specific research question. This is my reality. The dual identity of being a researcher and an educator plays a crucial role in shaping this qualitative research approach. Moreover, the 'lived' experiences to which I have been exposed at TVET institutions, has enabled me to assess my position in education and what it is supposed to be, given the operational circumstances at colleges.

On this viewpoint, Kadlec (2007:13) argues that '...critical theorists have traditionally viewed everyday lived experiences as a surface realm irredeemably corrupted by ideology that must be penetrated by a transcendently justified form of reason; whereas Dewey's critical pragmatism reverses the equation'. In this regard, Jackson (2009:656) holds that 'the pragmatic philosophical ontology that I have in mind here consists of the basic commitment about the relationship between the mind and the world'. This line of thinking relates to the change in my understanding of the socio-economic challenges influencing education, after having been exposed to the regimented demands made on me in the private sector. Indeed, this reasoning led me to re-think where my interests actually lie since it never was my intention to become an educator after matriculating in 1970, because the profession itself did not interest me at the time and the career prospects were not promising then.

However, my assigned duties in the private sector, as I argued in section 1.2, included an array of daily tasks which actually guided me towards developing a work ethic that supported the notion of an efficient usage of raw material. It meant that workers had to adhere to a minimal wastage of resources at all times. In this regard, compliance with this work regime was non-negotiable, which sensitised me towards developing business practices that advocated the pursuance of quality performance in a competitive business world. In fact, this work regime instilled in me a critical awareness to assess my own performance against predetermined targets in the first place and, secondly, to be accountable by working smarter with the methods that seek quality and/or excellence in performance.

Naturally, there were other contributory factors in the work situation which I found particularly demotivating. One of these was the routine, the repetitive nature of the tasks to which I was assigned, coupled with the oppressive working conditions. The latter were not conducive to my aspiration for a better-remunerated position, preferably in management, since I was not being tasked to use the skills that I had acquired during my degree studies. I became increasingly frustrated with my work situation and gradually became more comfortable with the thought of pursuing a career in education.

However, on entering education in 1981, as a relief lecturer in Physical Science and Mathematics for the Diploma in Education 1 (DE1 and 2) at the Bellville College of Education, I discovered that the work culture was substantially different in terms of pace, focus and methods followed as an individual educator. Indeed, the lengthy period that I served at Bellville College sensitised me to a work ethic in education delivery which was totally different in approach to any of my prior experiences, particularly in comparison to the rigorous regimes that are applied in the private sector. Indeed, it was the lack of the educators' accountability for the work that had been done in particular and the absence of any sanctions for persistent under-performance that were noticeable.

The management styles applied in educational activities were cumbersome and slow at a college of education, compared to what were considered the norm in the business sector that I was used to. In fact, it also became apparent that the absence of operational directives for accountability and the lack of pursuit of efficient practices in the college's activities and processes may have been instrumental in the problems experienced at colleges of education. Despite these operational obstacles, I argue that lecturing at a college of education was the most rewarding means of learning and skilling me for a career in education. Indeed, I was exposed to the technicalities and challenges of presenting educational programmes at institutions of learning, that is, schools and colleges. In addition, I became conversant with the demands that were made on staff and management to meet the social and political needs that colleges of education were mandated to fulfil.

After a decade spent at the college of education and, being conversant with the managerial skills required for the teaching function, I enrolled for a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree at Stellenbosch University's Business School. This MBA programme equipped me with comprehensive education and training in management, skills that I felt would qualify me for senior positions in education. At the same time, this advanced business study programme fostered critical engagement with diverse business philosophies and practices in terms of their applicability in a South African context. This line of thinking enabled me to become critical of the weaknesses, poor work ethic, and wastage of time and material at some schools.

Nevertheless, my experiences in education also served me well in dealing later with the demands of lecturing at a TVET college. I refer to the sites that Gewer (2001:133) describes as being located at the crossroad between General Education and Training (GET) and Higher Education and Training (HET). Moreover, Gewer (2001:133) suggests that TVET colleges were positioned to respond to current macro-strategies for human resource development. Indeed, I am of the opinion that I was actually fortunate to have joined Protea College, because it positioned me to experience participation in the unsettling transformation (amalgamation) processes at the TVET colleges at the turn of the century, which sets the course for preparing our youth for the 21st century through education, training and work.

I was tasked to fulfil a role for which I was qualified, namely that of skills development facilitator, which positioned me to facilitate staff development interventions and liaise with the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), mainly the Education and Training Development Practitioner (ETDP) SETA, in addition to being responsible for quality assurance processes at Protea College. TVET colleges were not only different in structure, they maintained a quick tempo at which projects and programmes were executed at various levels. More importantly, colleges were establishments where educators were held accountable and recognised for their results. Moreover, this was also my first encounter with visible efforts (checks and balances) implemented to pursue efficiencies in the execution of educational activities at colleges. In fact, I was more convinced that a business-like culture was evident at TVET colleges in terms of when, why and how things were done. It is these conditions to which I am partial and which I support, considering my MBA training.

Indeed, these lived experiences that accumulated in education at different institutions, aptly prepared me for my new task of mentoring Physical Science educators at under-performing schools in the townships in the Metropole East Educational District. In fact, I was now expected to share my experience in educational methodologies and procedures, primarily in Physical Science, to mentor and coach educators who experienced difficulties with teaching the subject. In this regard, Dewey (1938:25) postulates that 'some experiences are not educational, such as an experience that prevents or distorts the growth of further

experiences'. Indeed, Dewey (1938) argues that the challenge for experience-based education is to provide learners with quality experiences that will result in their growth and creativity. In the next section, I shall explore what I mean when I say I know something and how I got to know that something.

2.3.2. The epistemology of my study

In the previous section, I established my position, namely who I am as an educator and researcher in relation to the issues of my research. In this section, I shall clarify my epistemological position. In this regard, I draw on Love's (2000:2) claim that epistemology is from the Greek *episteme*, which means knowledge, and *logia*, which relates to the study of knowledge. Moreover, the term refers to the relationship between me, the knower, and the would-be-known, which, in this study, is knowledge or having information on educational policy matters pertaining to TVET colleges.

Both Mertens (1998) and Bailey (2007) concur with this view. They refer to this relationship as epistemological when it is between me, the knower, and the known information on policy matters, whereas Reybold (2002:537) holds that 'the concept of epistemology presumes a cognitive definition'. Mertens (1998) suggests that the epistemological question seeks to know the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the would-be-known.

Similarly, Bouma (1993:2) asks 'How do we know what we know?' This question is motivated by recognising that educators are confronted by questions about knowledge throughout life; therefore, how will they know what is true or false? First, in respect of this study, an expectation exists that the knowledge this study generates is sound. Second, it is each educator's duty to make students knowledgeable, by socialising them into received ideas and by encouraging them to engage critically with these ideas. With regard to the question, 'How do I obtain the knowledge I seek?' I shall argue that, to some extent, I know 'things' owing to my lived experiences that shaped my person and will most probably inform my research.

In this regard, whereas traditional epistemology relies on a notion of the thinking self, Kadlec (2007:17) holds that '...the private "knower" observes a reality that is out there apart from the knowing mind'. Dewey (1929:233) therefore posit that 'if it be admitted that knowing is something which occurs within nature, then it follows as a truism that knowing is an existential overt act'. According to Dewey, all knowledge is the product of a dynamic interaction between the knower and the known. In response, Kadlec (2007) contends that Dewey (1929) offers a radical critique of classical epistemology which systematically dismantles this 'spectator' theory of knowledge. In this regard, Dewey (1929:233) holds that the 'spectator theory of knowing may, humanly speaking, have been inevitable when thought

was viewed as an exercise of “reason” independent of the body, which by means of purely logical operations attained truth’. Hence, it is in place of the traditional distinction that posits a sharp distinction between the observing mind and external world (Kadlec, 2007).

One can therefore argue that all knowledge is active and that experimental and communicative inquiry is the mode through which we come to order our experiences in ways that allow us to apprehend the consequences of propositions in action (Kadlec, 2007). In this regard, DeForge and Shaw’s (2012:88) argument that ‘as soon as we start talking about epistemologies, it seems as though we also necessarily start talking about issues such as consciousness, mind, agency, and identity’. Indeed, this line of thinking probably suggests that it is necessary to have beliefs about what we are, in order to develop beliefs about what we can know. Such a perception would further suggest that knowledge is often understood as being something that is located within a mind that has consciousness in a conventional sense, and if a philosophy disagrees with this specific notion of consciousness and mind, then some other formulation of these things will be needed to help understand epistemology.

That is, according to DeForge and Shaw’s (2012:92) thinking, that ‘all knowledge is seen as impacting conduct in some way’. Thus, from a pragmatic epistemological approach to the above, the focus would most likely be on how the (lived) experiences of the participants in education and training, when contextualised, might inform future conduct at TVET colleges. Indeed, as I argued in Chapter 1, Dewey’s (1923:163) analysis of the nature of experience shows that ‘when we experience something, we [usually] act upon it - then we suffer or undergo the consequences’. In other words, we use our past educational experiences to construct new and better ones for use in the future (Dewey, 1929).

In this regard, Malachowski (2013:11) argues that ‘pragmatism’s key feature is the primacy it gives to practice’. This thinking links to Arndt’s (1929:12) claim that the characteristic pragmatic viewpoint is that things must be judged by their outcomes; what works is right. In this regard, one should abandon the rationalist scheme of verbal solutions and only work with specific facts and concrete conditions of experience. It is these experiences on which I drew when I mentored or guided Physical Science educators and which have shaped me, as an educator/mentor, enabling me to fulfil that role. Reybold (2002) holds that epistemological perspectives embody how individuals view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge, and authority. For example, in conducting research, I resorted to studying authoritative academic literature, published research reports and Government Gazettes.

As I argued in section 2.2, on the one hand we do not need absolutes of any kind to critically interrogate the anti-democratic (educational) interests that are being served by the perpetuation of an antagonistic and pecuniary conception of the individual (Kadlec, 2006), whereas, on the other hand, an appeal to any form of static absolutism (idealism) is not

merely unnecessary for orientating genuine critical reflection of education practices as argued in section 2.2. In this regard, it seriously impedes our efforts to grapple intelligently with a world of educational development that is changing (Kadlec, 2007).

However, from the perspective of critical pragmatism, metaphysical considerations are not those that license absolutism, because the idea that (transcendental) absolutism leaves us ill-equipped to harness the potential of lived experiences is based on a more fundamental understanding about what it takes to cultivate genuine critical reflection in a world that is essentially ‘an indefinite congeries of change’ (Kadlec, 2007:24). Therefore, one’s lived educational experiences are usually composed of continual changes and challenges that need to be negotiated.

Bouma (1993) therefore notes that we gain knowledge in a variety of ways, which I discussed in the previous paragraphs. However, according to Paisley and Butler’s (1983) reasoning, this could also mean that different methods of gaining knowledge may also produce different data. In this regard, research findings are largely specific to the method(s) used, whereas, Botella and Gallifa (1995) cited in Reybold (2002:537) argue that ‘generally, “a way of knowing” is a composite construct that incorporates what one understands about the nature and source of truth’. Therefore, to participate in educational discourse presupposes an attempt to agree on the truth of problematic issues, for example, opening education to business principles and values (Mulderigg, 2003).

In this regard, Paisley and Butler (1983) argue that it becomes the task of the education researcher to understand the various ways knowledge is produced and the specific forces which contribute towards its production. In this study, I shall explore (i) the establishment and the nature of market-directed educational policies, (ii) what they are supposed to contribute to education processes, and (iii) the consequences of their implementation on efficiency and social justice practices at educational institutions.

In having said that, I will have to explore Ball’s (2006) claim that we are influenced by policies; in other words, what actions we take to achieve desired targeted results. Therefore, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies; that is, after having explored what our ontologies are and how they impact on our conceptions of knowledge and inquiry. Therefore, I felt encouraged, as DeForge and Shaw (2011) have argued, to provide a clear description of the influence those pragmatic philosophical beliefs had on the methodological decisions that I have made and hope to defend. In the following section, I shall expand on this course of action.

2.3.3. The methodological framework

Van Wyk (2004) interprets methodology as the interface between methodical practice, substantive theory and epistemological underpinnings. However, according to Van Wyk's (2004) interpretation, methodology is the point at which method, theory and epistemology coalesce in an overt way in the process of directly investigating specific instances within the social world. Colton and Covert (2007:34) are supportive of this viewpoint by asserting that the concept of 'methodology' refers to 'how we go about understanding the phenomenon or question of interest' and addresses the approaches we use to collect information. The information that is referred to pertains to concepts of interests in this study, that is, apart from the key notions efficiency and social justice.

In this regard, I am referring to other concepts of interests to this study such as first, the guiding philosophy, neoliberalism second; I refer to educational discourses which reflect our concerns, opinions and criticisms, for example, about the quality of a college education and training. Third, I refer to market-directed/oriented policies that seek market-related solutions for social challenges. The selection of methodology, however, depended on several factors such as the research question to be addressed; the availability of resources; the time required to conduct the study; and the skills and expertise required for working with a particular approach (pragmatic) (Colton & Covert, 2007). In having selected a pragmatic approach as the major approach to conduct this study, the work of John Dewey in providing philosophical guidance and clarity becomes a necessity.

However, my reading and review of the literature on Dewey's work has revealed that this scholar in philosophy has not prescribed a particular methodology. The same can be said of Foucault's reluctance to clearly delineate a research methodology, according to Graham (2005). Colton and Covert (2007) nevertheless hold that the crucial choice of methodology frames the manner in which information is obtained, analysed and interpreted. Hence, Hickman's (2007) claim that a clear explication of the impact of pragmatic philosophical beliefs on the methodological decisions that I have to make is necessary if I ever hope to defend the approaches to the inquiry that I have selected.

After all, beliefs interpreted in a Deweyan pragmatic way are simply habits of action (DeForge & Shaw 2012). I shall therefore chiefly draw on the theories and interpretations of John Dewey and, to a lesser extent, Michel Foucault's viewpoints pertaining to issues involving power relationships in educational practices. In conducting the study by means of a conceptual investigation, it will have to be based on comparative international, local and theoretical literature, policy documents and institutional TVET documents. In fact, this study's conceptual investigation will be based on what Savage, Kautz and Clarke (2016) regard as a systematic literature review.

However, in doing the research, which I will conduct via a conceptual framework as a network, or plane, it is not merely a collection of interlinked concepts but rather a construct in which each concept plays an integral role. In fact, the concepts that constitute a conceptual framework, support one another. According to Miles and Huberman (1994:440), a conceptual framework 'lays out the key factors, constructs, or variables, and presumes relationships among them'. Jabareen (2009:49) defines it 'as a network or a "plane" of linked concepts'. He further adds that this framework offers a procedure of theorisation whose advantages are its flexibility, its capacity for modification and its emphasis on understanding instead of prediction.

In other words, the conceptual framework sets the stage for the presentation of the particular research question(s) that drives the investigation that is being conducted based on, according to Regoniel (2015:2), exploring the main research question, namely 'Do market-oriented education policies that pursue greater efficiency practices at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges promote social justice?'. In having decided to conduct an adjusted concept framework based on Jabareen's (2009:49) example implies that I will first have to identify and define the key concepts that will shape the study. Second, I will deconstruct and categorise the concepts involved by identifying the main attributes, characteristics, assumptions and role. Third, I will have to establish the specific relationship(s) that may exist among the different concepts, for example, by assessing whether the concepts are compatible or mutually exclusive or in opposition to one another.

In this regard, Lenski (2010: 74) holds that 'a conceptual specification is normally demanded by any question that begins with "what is...?"'. These questions, argue Lenski, are raised on a conceptual level and, therefore demand an answer of the same type (Lenski, 2010). However, before I commence by explaining the key concepts in this study, it is important to clarify what a concept is. In this regard, Solomons (2009:8) refers to Du Toit (cited in De Vos, Fouche & Delport (2005:424) who describes a concept as 'a particular type of word that plays a key role in formal processes of knowledge acquisition, formation and transfer' whereas Kathan (1969:1-2) describes the word 'concept' as 'a general notion or idea comprising all the attributes common to a class of things' and, from a different perspective, that 'a concept is something conceived in the mind'. Solomons (2009), however, reminds the reader that in all instances of research, certain concepts are embedded in and constitute the field of research.

In this study, the key concepts that will be explored include the following: efficiency, social justice, neoliberalism and discourses. In doing so, this study will be providing a theoretical presentation of government's endeavour to establish efficient educational and social justice practices, specifically at TVET colleges. This intention, I argue, is an important one in the development of the study because I shall have to analyse educational systemic situations

(regional) which will commence from Chapter 3 and continue in subsequent chapters. A feature of this work is its willingness to grapple with the historical and institutional specifics of a said country under study, which is characteristic of the classic studies of the policy process in a comparative perspective (Mabbett & Bolderson, 1999).

In response, I draw on Akoojee's (2002:2) reference to the White Paper (RSA, 1997a) that a programme 'for the transformation of higher education' in South Africa is essential. This perception links to Dewey's (1921:2) argument that 'the past is recalled not because of itself but because of what it adds to the present'. In this regard, studies are performed within a single national situation, such as South Africa's TVET colleges' educational situation, as the unit of discussion. However, Lor (2011:8) holds that 'generally, a study of a single country can be very intensive and conducted in considerable detail'.

In having said that, this study will also look at the following aspects of post-school education and training in South Africa: first, the uniqueness of South African policies influencing education delivery, that is, from an efficiency point of view; second, in the institutional creation of racial inequalities in education provision; third, by the poor racially-based educational outcomes which adversely influence the work prospects of students from disadvantaged communities. Therefore, this study will have to examine the pre- and post-apartheid educational situation as described by Akoojee, McGrath and Visser (2008). The reality at the pre-apartheid time revealed a college sector which was unfit for the purpose of promoting social and economic well-being of, particularly, the under-privileged masses throughout South Africa. This scenario will be assessed against Mandela's viewpoint which was, according to Gebremedhin and Joshi (2016:175), that 'the function of education is to serve the well-being of the nation and its people from all racial and class backgrounds'.

In this regard, Dewey (1923:65) holds that 'if education is growth, it must progressively realise present possibilities, and thus make individuals better fitted to cope with later requirements'. However, a clear explication of the impact of pragmatic philosophical beliefs on the methodological decisions I have made is necessary, especially if I ever hope to defend the approaches to inquiry that I have selected. In this regard, a pragmatic approach will allow me to engage with the challenges and practices that efficiency practices demand of educational institutions. Foucault (1988:123), however, warns (institutions) that 'we can never be ensnared by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy'. Therefore, in having already explored the epistemological, ontological and methodological premises in the previous sections, I shall now focus on the theoretical aspects of my research in the following section.

2.4. Theory and research

Ball (2006:62) poses the questions: 'What does theory mean? How can theory help? What is the point of theory?' In my opinion, Sutherland's (1988) response is most appropriate, as he argues that theories do make a difference. For example, the desired outcome of high-quality education delivery may probably take a long time to establish. This is so, because educational outcomes depend on the combined efforts of a variety of role players and stakeholders.

This line of thinking links to Thomas's (2007) argument that persons involved in education should be concerned about the methods and the consequences of theory, since these consequences are manifested in the real world of the classrooms and the real lives of educators and student. As such, the role that, say, educational theory plays, has real influence in shaping the lives of those that are intimately involved in educational practices. In this regard, Foucault is relevant when he states:

The role of theory today appears to me to be exactly that: not to formulate the global systematicity, which puts everything in place; but to analyse the specificity of mechanisms of power, locate the liaisons, the extensions, to build step by step knowledge of strategy (Foucault: 1979:57).

This extract of Foucault (1979) refers to the role that theory assumes in practice, linking up with Leistyna's (2009) claim that theory embodies how people interpret, analyse and make generalisations about why the world works the way that it does. Indeed, Ball (1995:267) reminds us that 'the point about theory is not that it is simply critical' and that theory in educational research should be 'to engage in [the] struggle to reveal and undermine what is most invisible and insidious in prevailing practices'. This line of thinking relates to Zack's (2008:48) claim that 'theory is an instrument used to solve problems encountered in experience, and [in particular] a theory is neither true nor false until tested in experience'. One can therefore reason that theorising, on the one hand, is the ability to analyse bodies of knowledge and human practices, whereas, on the other hand, Leistyna (2009) notes that theorising encourages individuals to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of conceptual and practical movements.

In this regard, Hellmann (2009) suggests presenting pragmatism, the major theoretical lens in this study, as a coherent theory of thought and action. Moreover, he advocates that 'theory' is synonymous here with 'doctrine' or 'axiom', which is a belief to be true or, more pragmatically still, a tool that is used to think about thought and action, which enables us to cope better. On this issue, Putnam (1995) holds that 'the core of this theory is the primacy of [educational] practice – "perhaps the central principle" of the pragmatist tradition'. According to this principle, the inevitability of individual as well as collective action due to policy intervention is to be thought of as the necessary starting point of any politically-inspired theorising about thought and action (Hellman, 2009). In this regard, Dewey (1931, 1938) has

even suggested that our lived experiences, thoughts and actions, have shaped our expectations for a desired future state by producing a new democratic belief. Indeed, one could therefore say that the view that a belief is a habit of action implies, among other things, that anyone can have and needs to have, his or her own point of view.

Westbrook (1999:1) holds that ‘Dewey’s commitment to democracy and to the integration of theory and practice was most evident in his career as an educational reformer’. This statement supports the idea of Kalolo’s (2015) that the application of pragmatism in educational research is also based on attempts to link educational theories to practice, namely by describing and solving educational challenges in their contextual settings and the relevance and functionality of education to the public. Such an approach is possible, since Kalolo (2015:150) argues that ‘pragmatism is better equipped than any other approach because of its power of complementarity whereby the weakness of one [Critical Theory] methodology is complemented by the strengths of the other [pragmatism] methodology’.

In this regard, I am referring to the strength of pragmatism vis-à-vis a lesser complementary role of critical theory in this study. However, unlike other worldviews, Kalolo (2015) notes that Biesta and Burbules (2003) contend that pragmatism is not informed by formal theory, but by accumulated practices; practitioner and administrator knowledge; and the findings from previous research and the views expressed by the public. Runes (1983), on the one hand, looks at pragmatism as a philosophical movement that stresses practical consequences and values as standards by which concepts are to be analysed and their validity determined. In other words, pragmatism is the philosophical notion that ideas or principles are true as far as they work (Kalolo, 2015). On the other hand, Dewey (1929:58) argues that ‘although practical action is based on the knowledge provided by theory, it is completely disconnected from its acquisition because practice is a mere external follower upon knowledge, having no part in its determination’.

It is not that educational theory can tell us how things are and that practice merely has to follow. However, the real validity of the theory depends on the derived propositions being consonant with facts, whereas Horkheimer (1972:188) holds that ‘theory is stored-up knowledge, in a form that makes it useful for the closest possible description of facts’. However, in relation to (available) facts, a theory always remains a hypothesis, which means one must be ready to change it; that is, if its weaknesses begin to surface as one works through the material (Horkheimer, 1972). This line of thinking reminds me of Fay’s (1987) reference to critical theory that explains a (democratic) social order in such a way that it becomes the catalyst, which leads to the transformation of this order. This I will explore when I engage with the influence(s) and their consequences that market-oriented policies exert in shaping social justice practices at TVET colleges.

However, in doing so, I am reminded of Carr's (1995) note that critique is a method for evaluating the rationality of a practice (action) from a cogent and clearly articulated educational point of view. In this regard, I will accept Foucault's (1979) advice to explore the ways in which discourses are implicated in relations of power. However, my study takes, as its starting point, Rawls' (1971:3) claim that 'justice is the first virtue of social institutions [schools and TVET colleges], as truth is of systems of thought'. Indeed, Foucault's central concern is not to realise philosophical ideals in practice(s), argues Woermann (2012), but rather to make people aware of those forms of knowledge, norms and ideals that constitute their lives. This thinking links to a rationale that educational laws and institutions in particular, no matter how efficient and well arranged, must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. This means that people's 'rights' to a just education will be violated if justice does not underpin the operations and processes of these institutions. This line of thinking links to Ball's (2006) note that theory is a vehicle for thinking otherwise and a platform for unleashing criticism.

This viewpoint relates to Bohman's (2005) argument that a theory is adequate only if it meets three criteria; namely, it must be explanatory, practical and normative, all at the same time. This means that theory must explain what is wrong with the current social reality in education. In this regard, I shall draw on van Dijk's (1995:19) opinion that when one is examining discourse, it requires good theories of the role of discourse in the enactment and reproduction of social dominance and resistance. I am, however, aware of the 'problem' whereby social critique of politics and government inevitably becomes moral critique, because of the failings of the state (Kendall & Wickham, 2006). In this regard, I shall argue that it is actually about whether the policies of government are effective and, more specifically for this study, whether these policies actually lead to improved efficiency practices at government institutions.

2.5. Analysing education policy

In this section I will draw the reader's attention to Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry's (1997) argument that, in analysing policy, we need to bear in mind the distinction made between policy per se and the substantive issues with which a specific policy deals. These scholars argue that the first task in analysing policy is to focus on the issue itself. Apparently, there is a need to do this to assess how the policy is likely to work in relation to the problems it intends addressing. In this regard, Humpage and Fleras (2001) hold that the general public often assume that policies have one intended purpose, which can be universally understood.

However, policies are neither neutral nor static entities with a singular and uncontested point of reference. In fact, their meanings are constituted and reconstituted in an ongoing process of construction and reconstruction within diverse and contested social contexts (Humpage &

Fleras, 2001). According to Humpage and Fleras (2001), policy contents evolve as a wide and complex 'space' of plans, documents and practices in which, for example, key concepts such as social justice, equality and redress, may be interpreted and negotiated from a wide range of perspectives. Such perspectives are shaped by the philosophical positions of those who control, comment upon and capitalise on the competing interests of intersecting policy discourses.

However, Walker (2001) holds that policy analysis is a general approach to problem solving. Moreover, it is not a specific methodology, but it makes use of a variety of methodologies in the context of a generic framework. Therefore, one needs to gain an understanding of the issues that constitute the focus of a specific social policy, education for example, which is analysed or developed. Sometimes, however, 'we are thwarted and face a practical uncertainty. This uncertainty may initiate an educational discourse in which participants offer reasons for the best solution about what is to be done to remedy education problems' (Bernstein, 2010:184). If the situation is resolved satisfactorily, one would proceed to face new challenges. Failing to do so, will require that we continue to engage in inquiry (Bernstein, 2010).

In this regard, Taylor *et al.* (1997) maintain that critical policy analysis must be concerned with reform and change; that is, to make judgements as to whether and in what ways policies will actually help to improve particular situations. Bell and Stevenson (2006) argue that a number of questions form the basis of policy analysis. I refer to questions such as, what is the approach to education? Why was the policy adopted? On whose terms was the policy adopted? In whose interests will it serve? Why now? What are the consequences? These are among the questions to use as a starting point to develop a framework for policy analysis. The analysis, in turn, is organised into three aspects of policy, namely context, text and consequences (Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Taylor *et al.*, 1997).

These aspects include firstly, the context, which refers to the antecedents and pressures leading to the development of specific policy/policies. Secondly, it refers to text, which broadly refers to the content of policy itself, meaning how the policy is formulated and the aims it strives to achieve. Thirdly, it refers to the consequences for whether the policy texts are open to different interpretations by practitioners that are likely to result in differences in implementation of policy (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

Having now discussed what the analysis of policies means, I will continue to unpack the specific sources that have to be used in developing this study. Here, I refer to the general public's discontent felt in respect of the failures; that is, in the action and justice of the execution of the ANC government's neoliberal ideology underpinning educational policies, as articulated in sources such as academic journals, reports and newspaper articles. In this

regard, the notion 'ideology' is described in the Oxford Dictionary of English (2010:869) as 'a system of ideas and ideals', especially one which forms the basis of economics or political theory and policy'. In this section I touched on the sources of discourse and promised to provide more detail at a later stage. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.6. Sources of educational discourse

In section 1.5, I touched on these sources and promised to provide more detail at a later stage. In view of the nature of the type of research design that I intend to follow, it can be expected that the information that I will seek will preferably be drawn, where possible, from secondary sources. For example, information obtainable from official public documents may probably reflect the authentic position of the ruling party with regard to educational matters. Therefore, by analysing these documents, the underlying intentions and assumptions that appear to have motivated the thinking of the government may be revealed.

2.6.1. Official documents

In this subsection, I shall discuss official publications, be they public, namely of a state origin, or public research reports, surveys and interviews. I have decided to utilise these sources despite McCulloch's (2004) assertion that social researchers increasingly neglect the use of documents. I refer here to the handling of documentary resources, such as government gazettes, published interviews, speeches and newspapers, among others, which are widely accepted as the hallmark of a professional historian.

Moreover, the growing popularity of edited versions of documents in published form may be a possible source that I may explore (McCulloch, 2004). This refers to, for example, the emergence of virtual documents stored electronically rather than on paper, which herald a new age for documentary-based studies (McCulloch, 2004). Since online documents can often furnish valuable evidence for educational and social researchers, they constitute a source that is potentially of immense significance for documentary research. Indeed, such sources perform an important role in providing access to documents that may be difficult to obtain (McCulloch, 2004). I therefore argue that the Internet and electronic mail may provide unprecedented access to documents which hitherto have been available to only a few.

At this stage, I will need to clarify the distinction between the primary and secondary sources. In this regard, I draw on Marwick's (2001) reasoning, which, according to McCulloch (2004), suggests that the distinction between primary and secondary sources is explicit and not misleading. Marwick argues that the distinction is one of nature by suggesting that primary sources were created within the period studied, whereas historians produced secondary sources later. In this regard, Ranke (1970) regards primary documents as those which are produced by eyewitnesses and participants in events, letters, memoirs and diaries, among

others, which render them superior to secondary documents and scholarly works such as articles.

Nevertheless, documents are extremely important for corroborating evidence with other sources. Moreover, documents are often used to create a certain kind of predictability and uniformity out of the variety of events and social arrangements (Olssen *et al.*, 2004). This means that when organisations such as the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) generate documentary records, they transform diverse circumstances and people into documentary forms that can be processed in standardised ways. Such reasoning supports Olssen *et al.* (2004) who claim, on the one hand, that policy documents are construed as expressions of particular information, ideas and intentions, whereas, on the other hand, policy documents can be described, according to Marginson (1993), as the public expression of the intent of government and as the constitution of the official discourse of the state. Therefore, the task of analysis becomes one of establishing the correct interpretation of the text (Olssen *et al.*, 2004).

However, Tosh (2002) refers to the difficulties involved in the analysis of documents, particularly in obtaining primary source material. In this regard, McCulloch (2004) holds that Tosh (2002) regards the mastery of sources as generally unattainable because each requires careful appraisal. Indeed, Tosh (2002) asserts further that primary sources are not an open book, offering instant answers, or they may not be what they seem to be. Nevertheless, there are basic, established rules that apply in appraising and analysing documents that are generally discussed in terms of authenticity and reliability. For example, McCulloch (2004) holds that it is crucial to establish the authenticity of documents, namely, whether the information obtained in them is genuine and of unquestionable origin.

In this study, this problem may be solved by primarily using information supplied by authentic bodies, such as Government Gazettes, publications of the HSRC reports or the works of other authentic research bodies. Another matter that may pose a problem pertains to the level of experience of authors of documentary material. In this case, the author may be regarded as inadequately experienced for his or her account to be wholly trusted. For example, this would include occasions when he or she omits important information or there may be an element of bias on the part of the author which the researcher needs to take into account. For this study, the reliability of data provided in reports of bona fide educational bodies, such as TVET college reports, may require verification against government reports.

Yin (1998) holds that official documents are not necessarily objective or unbiased. However, these documents may reflect the motivation of official education policies and therefore will articulate what its sponsors (like the state) intend them to communicate or the course of action required. Therefore, one needs to take cognisance of the fact that such reports do not

necessarily reflect actual practices at TVET colleges. One can therefore understand why authenticity of documents may be challenged, because the actual knowledge may be in the public's interest. However, texts are often aimed at particular classes of readers, which results in a restricted readership. This may be interpreted as a barrier where only people with specific competencies will be able to decode them properly.

Therefore, Thomas (2009) comments that Harvey (1996) regards discourses as manifestations of power in that they are sites of struggle over understandings of reality, via limited or qualified access to information that is denied to a meaningful section of the general public. Hence, Thomas's (2009) argument that both policy and media discourses can be conceptualised as discourses in the public sphere, and as sites where power is exercised by contesting groups in discursive struggles over the construction of a public authoritative voice.

2.6.2. Newspapers

Tosh (2002) argues that the press constitutes the most important type of public source of material, because it records the political and social views that are most influential at any particular time. It provides a day-to-day record of events that occurred and sometimes may even launch thorough enquiries into specific issues deemed to be of public concern. Van Dijk (2001a) concurs by reminding us of the undeniable power of the media that has inspired many critical studies. This view is rather fitting with regard to education delivery in South Africa, considering the public concerns directed at its effectiveness and quality.

One may possibly argue that newspapers, as a source of information, may be useful for the basic information which they provide to historians and social researchers (McCulloch, 2004). However, there are drawbacks that may require thorough scanning for bias and inaccuracies. On the other hand, an important aspect of the availability of newspapers is their accessibility to the public. It is this availability of newspapers to the general public which confirms Sholar's (1994) note in Thomas (2009) that 'both the media and policy discourses may be described as public discourses that work by creating perceptions among the general public which in turn influence public opinion'. Since the general public is concerned with communal well-being and community interests, I therefore support the viewpoint that media texts are forms of public, institutional discourse embedded in relations of power and resistance (Bell & Garrett 1998, Fairclough 1995, and others, since this list is not exclusive).

I therefore support Van Dijk's (2001a) observation that it is possible that the power of the media has inspired many critical studies in many disciplines, including educational discourse studies. Even though newspaper letters and articles are not an academic source of information, for example in doctoral research, large government organs including ministerial commentaries on education policies and strategies, are published in this media. Therefore, I have decided to include this source of ministerial information in my research to serve that

particular purpose. Since analytical approaches to content in critical media studies have often revealed biased, stereotyping, sexist or racist images in text, I shall therefore use the information that I gather via this medium as supporting evidence to strengthen my argument in responding to the research questions that I formulated in section 1.4.

On the other hand, analyses or commentaries that were published in the news media may be appropriate to solicit public opinion on prevailing educational issues. Richardson (2007), for example, argues that the sourcing and construction of news is linked to actions and opinions of social groups; for example, powerful pressure groups. In this regard, I refer to views of eminent writers on South African education, for example, newspaper comments made by scholars such as Kallaway, Cloete, Rice, Jansen and Ramphele, who are respected in the South African educational context.

It is therefore possible to select and compose news that informs the interest of an academic audience. At the same time, it may serve the interests of the wider public. However, Totale (2003) holds that the critical approach favours a personal interpretation of the meaning, where the reader must draw on other texts and his or her own personal experiences. For example, issues pertaining to education delivery are in the public interest because these issues address the viability of our education and, more specifically, the destiny of the youth that receives such education.

2.6.3. Academic Literature

The claim made by Adams *et al.* (2007) in section 1.4, that the most reliable sources of information for research purposes are academic journals, websites of academic departments and textbooks of noted writers, should be of particular interest to the inexperienced researcher. The reason is that literature published by academic and government departments are subjected to the process of refereeing and editing, hence their reliability (Adams *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, the fact that these authors own academic credibility is at stake would more than likely ensure, according to Adams *et al.*'s (2007) thinking, that the literature is of a high standard.

The reason, McGuigan and Russell (2008) argue, is that academic journals are the primary means for disseminating scholarly work and this fact places the journal publishers in a uniquely powerful position. In fact, the primary users of the journals, are, according to McGuigan and Russell (2008), the very same group that produce journal content, namely, the faculty of colleges and universities. Indeed, after the journal content has been consumed by the faculty/scholars, new knowledge and research is produced and continues the cycle.

Hence McGuigan and Russell's (2008) claim that the incentives for faculty scholars to participate in this cycle are twofold. These are, firstly, that the norms of the profession

strongly encourage faculty members to participate in the generation and dissemination of new knowledge based on research or scholarly activities. Secondly, the academic process of promotion and tenure and the role of credentialism in determining faculty advancement strongly emphasise the production of scholarly articles. Therefore, as a requirement for promotion and tenure, faculty members must ‘produce’ and ‘consume’ peer-reviewed journal articles in scholarly publications.

The reason for this is that the process of creating new knowledge requires the review and research of previously published works so that new ideas or theories or concepts or models can be built out of the old. This drive to produce, as a result of pressures peculiar to academe, results in the continued supply of manuscripts to the journal publishers and also to the creation of new, specialised journals to meet the needs of faculty scholars as both supplier and consumer. In this regard, the reputation of established publications influences the judgments about the quality of content, in particular, the ‘impact factor’ as determined by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) as published in journal citation reports.

Furthermore, just as the internet has helped to decouple traditional supply chains in global markets, a move to electronic, Web-based journal publishing and distribution have loosened the ties that bind academic libraries to the for-profit publishers. Hence, McGuigan and Russell’s (2008:8) claim that the open access movement provides ‘peer-reviewed journals whose content is made freely available on the internet upon publication for use by anyone anywhere for any purpose as long as the authors are properly acknowledged’.

It follows that, as one’s level of sophistication in research skill improves, journal articles become the primary source of information, which seems to be a plausible assumption (Graziano & Raulin, 2010). I therefore support Dane’s (2011:25) argument that ‘skimming through new issues of journals or an annual series is one way to develop your research idea and to find information related to it’. This corresponds with Dane’s (2011:24) claim that ‘journals are not the only sources for relevant literature, although they are likely to be the major sources’.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to establish the ‘how’ of conducting this study, in order to inform, but more importantly, to orientate my readers to my methodological plan of action in conducting this research study. As I mentioned in section 1.3, the research question(s) will dictate how I was to apply a pragmatist’s methodological approach, namely, the so-called philosophy of action, to produce reliable evidence that will either confirm or refute what the research question(s) wish to establish. In this regard, I argue, my critical stance in assessing the perceived justice in the application of educational policies was an important consideration, by following a conceptual investigation regime in this study.

Indeed, by engaging with the key issues of efficiency and social justice in actual educational practices will determine how and/or whether the targets of these key notions were actually achieved at, say, TVET colleges. After having established that, I was in a position to ascertain whether market-directed policies were actually effective in promoting the execution of social justice practices at TVET colleges. Part of this process will be in unpacking the pertinent issues, namely, first, the appropriateness and second, the 'justice' of the policies of market-oriented implementation. Since the enforcement of these policies has evoked a deluge of critical commentaries in various educational discourses, 'justice' considerations cannot therefore be ignored as an important aspect of the study. However, the overriding consideration for this study remains the establishment of efficient educational practices at colleges.

These considerations, I argue, will guide me in conducting my inquiry by following a conceptual investigation by analysing the content and hidden meanings of that which is articulated in educational discourses. However, in doing so, I will also have to heed Foucault's cautioning that discourses cannot be analysed only in the present, because the power components and historical components create a knot of shifting meanings over time. In this regard, I will have to re-visit Lawton's (1977) claim that there is no essential conflict between the major two themes, namely efficiency and social justice, even though the reality in South Africa shows otherwise. In Chapter 3, I will unpack the efficiency educational discourses to ascertain how policies are targeted to achieve the desired outcomes as is reflected in the research question.

Chapter 3

Discourses of efficiency that shape TVET College practises

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I informed the reader that I intend to explore the research questions primarily via a pragmatic lens, by unpacking how TVET colleges in South Africa pursue neoliberal underpinned educational policy targets, namely efficiency, and social justice in their educational practices. In this regard, Soares, Steele and Wayt (2016) contend that colleges and universities are under extraordinary pressure not only to produce more and better-trained, skilled graduates but also to do so with decreasing revenues. I shall therefore, in this Chapter, explore first, the consequences that relate to the TVET colleges' pursuit of efficiency targets that are articulated in discourses and second, how the efficiency discourse actually shapes education processes and programmes at TVET colleges as is reflected in the main research question.

With regard to the concept discourse, Ball (2006) said in section 1.2 that the interpretation of discourses is what can be said and thought, but also who can speak and with what authority. Whilst the concept efficiency, to be discussed later, is referred to by Frederickson (2010: xv) as 'achieving the most, the best, or the most preferable public services for available resources'. However, despite limited budgets for some, institutions are nevertheless expected to provide more services for students and their communities. Therefore, this study's focus is on exploring specifically TVET colleges' attempts to realise policy directives as they are mandated to do.

This perspective arguably led to critics arguing that market-oriented policies allegedly promote inequalities and corrode quality of life. That is contrary to what Barambah *et al.* (2008) claim in Hennessy and McNamara (2013) that market forces operate in the best interests of the majority or of society. It is therefore clear that advocates for or against neoliberalism interpret its influences on society differently. This chapter will endeavour to explore both perspectives of neoliberal influences, particularly with respect to the adherence to efficiency practices in education. In this regard, Kadlec (2006) holds that a pragmatic approach as a philosophy reflects with an almost disarming candour the spirit of the prevailing business culture. However, before I can expand on the neoliberal influences in education, I shall provide a brief historical overview of neoliberalism in the following section. This section will familiarise the reader with the notion neoliberalism, because this economy-related phenomenon has significantly influenced the economic and social prospects of many developing countries.

3.2. The rise of neoliberalism (free-market capitalism)

Marginson and Rhoades (2002:284) noted that Neave and Van Vught (1994) contend that '[t]he worldwide proliferation of neoliberal policies further reinforces scholars' bipolar focuses on states versus higher education institutions, and states versus markets'. In addition, Rizvi and Lingard (2010:2) argued in section 1.2 that 'market ideologies [which are] framed by neoliberalism became ascendant around the world'. In having said that, I shall argue that Marginson and Rhoades (2002:282) are justified in stating that '[t]oday higher education in every corner of the globe is being influenced by global economic, cultural, educational forces and higher education institutions themselves'.

This study will therefore have to establish 'how' market forces, and through 'which' policy interventions these forces operate, allegedly in 'the best interests' of the majority of society in education, as said earlier. It would therefore require a fairly detailed elaboration on 'how' educational practices are influenced at, say, TVET colleges. My thinking, in this regard, is influenced by Von Werlhof's (2008:6) note that the logic of neoliberalism does not remain in the economic sphere alone, but has entered and transformed politics and has created global injustice. In this regard, Gebremedhin and Joshi (2016:192) hold that 'after Mandela left office, with the rise of the ANC hegemony in the 2000s, we observed that education shifted more towards economic imperatives and justifications'.

I refer here specifically to the alleged 'pressure' or should I say 'power' of coercion to enforce conformity to the dictates of neo-liberalism and corporate hegemony which Hill (2007) refers to in Hennessy and McNamara (2013). In this regard, I shall draw on Foucault's (1980) thinking, as is argued in Wickham (1986), who notes that power must be studied at the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its target or alleged field of application, that is, where it instils itself and produces its real (visible) effects. For example, this neoliberalistic approach in strategy emphasises the imperative of international competitiveness and efficiency, which provide the justification for moving away from the social responsibilities of the state (Nkomo *et al.*, 2007).

This perception probably explains Leistyna's (2009) statement that in this era of globalisation, no society is entirely isolated and untouched by neoliberal economic policies and practices; for example, any global action, say in education, will most probably have a local impact. Nevertheless, Fitzsimons (2000) maintains that despite its position as the master discourse, neoliberalism has not been able to fix impervious structures. Therefore, within the state, he suggests that we find support for our efforts from those (policies) responsible for social policies (such as social justice).

3.2.1. Conceptualising neoliberalism

Martinez and Garcia (2000) and Thorsen and Lie (2007) pose the question: 'what is neoliberalism?' which has drawn responses from a number of noted scholars. In this regard, I include Thorsen and Lie's (2007) own response, that neoliberalism has become widespread in some political and academic debates during recent years. Allais (2012:639), on the one hand, draws on Marais' (2011) claim that 'neoliberalism represents a new modality of government predicated on interventions to create the organisational and subjective conditions for entrepreneurship'. In this regard, Lynch (2014) holds that, with the rise of neoliberalism as a system of values, there is an increasing attempt to off-load the cost of education, health care and public services generally onto the individual. In other words, people were supposed to have learned to become more responsible in managing their costs in a free market capitalistic society.

This line of thinking supports Thorsen and Lie's (2007:1) contention that several authors have argued that neoliberalism is 'the dominant ideology shaping our world today' and that we live in an 'age of neoliberalism'. On the one hand, this viewpoint may also be linked to what Peters Fitzsimons and Marshall (1999) assert that 'neoliberalism is a substantive discourse of governance, which is potent precisely because of its capacity to combine economics, the social, and politics, on behalf of rational choice as a principle of legitimacy' (Fitzsimons, 2000:2). On the other hand, Fejes and Nicholl (2008:13) argue that neoliberalism constitutes a particular relationship between government and the governed.

In this regard, Thorsen and Lie (2007) argue that authors allegedly use the concept pejoratively; that is, by describing what they perceive as the lamentable spread of global capitalism and consumerism, as well as the equally deplorable demolition of the proactive welfare state. Hence, Von Werlhof (2011) notes that neoliberalism has an economic policy agenda which began in 1973. Martinez and Garcia (2000) concur by referring to neoliberalism as a set of economic policies that have become widespread during the last 25 years. On the other hand, Narodowski and Nores' (2002:2) description of neoliberalism is that of 'a general term, which relates to a series of measures towards opening and deregulating the economy, such as deregulating the labour market, restricting union activities and allowing an inflexible use of the labour force within a competitive arena'.

However, Harvey's (2006:145) description provides a more protracted definition of neoliberalism, such as where it started and what we know about it:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to

create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money (Harvey, 2006:145).

I shall therefore support this viewpoint that Harvey (2006) proposes in the extract; that is, that neoliberalism is not merely a continuation of liberalism 'proper', but as something, which has taken on its own liberal values and policies. In this regard, Harvey (2006:145) emphasises that neoliberalism is 'a theory of political economic practices' rather than a 'complete' political ideology, whereas Thorsen and Lie (2007) posit that neoliberalism is customarily regarded as the return and spread of one specific aspect of the liberal tradition, namely economic liberalism. Both, however, support the belief that states ought to abstain from intervening in the economy and that states leave as much as possible to individuals participating in free and self-regulating markets. This strategy is consistent with the findings in the United States of America's Spelling Report that:

In tomorrow's world a nation's wealth will derive from its capacity to educate, attract, and retain citizens who are able to work smarter and learn faster – making educational achievement ever more important both for individuals and for society writ large (Jones, 2009:53)

Following the line of thinking in this discourse, Jones (2009) holds that valuable citizens are those who can contribute to the economy through their ability to work. In no part of this quote are non-economic qualities, such as moral or ethical responsibility, ever mentioned as important parts of the identity of students. Instead, Allais (2012:639) holds that 'in a neoliberal policy environment focused on self-help and responsabilisation,³ education, and particularly vocational education and skills, becomes part of how policy makers avoid addressing structural problems in the economy'. In other words, the individual becomes less of a burden to government spending, that is, financially. In this regard, the government would then be in a better financial position to initiate or sustain further infrastructural development programmes.

However, Western, Baxter, Pakulski, Tranter, Western, Van Egmond, Chesters, Hosking, Van Gellecum and O'Flaherty's (2007) claim that underpinning neoliberal (market-oriented) policies impose compliance to government's political will. This determination of government is aptly motivated, I argue, by Johns, Morphet and Alexander's (1983: 9) claim that the production and consumption of education is vital to the survival and progress of any modern

³ Wakefield and Fleming (2009) contend that 'responsibilisation' is a term developed in the governmentality literature to refer to the process whereby subjects are rendered individually responsible for a task which previously would have been the duty of another – usually a state agency – or would not have been recognized as a responsibility at all.

nation. Therefore, Johns *et al.* (1983: 14) rightfully argue that ‘expenditure for education is an investment for the purpose of adding to the educational capital’ (the process of adding to the productive capacity) of the people. However, the refusal to invest funds in education has frequently been justified on the grounds of thrift and economy (Johns *et al.*, 1983).

In having said that, Johns *et al.* (1983: 29) contend that ‘education expenditures affect the economy most favourably when they are determined by human wants for education’. In this regard, such a policy makes educational expenditure a stabilising factor in the economy and also satisfies human (citizens’) wants. This viewpoint, I think, supports Nkomo, Akoojee and Motlhanke’s (2007) statement that the new imperatives of a market economy became particularly prominent after 1997 by the shift of the ANC-government’s adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy when they had to face the challenges of governing a relatively poorly skilled nation.

Therefore, this study will have to focus on the influences that the pursuit of efficiency had in the shaping or restructuring of educational practices, in colleges’ processes, programmes and management. In this regard, Allais (2012:639) posits that Marais (2011) and Bond (2000, 2005) claim that ‘the broader political and economic context in South Africa has been strongly determined by neoliberalism’. This line of thinking is evident as Allais (2012) argues that among the various factors that have affected vocational education and skills training since the transition to democracy, was that there was no industrial policy in this period. In this regard, the logic was that the comparative advantage would emerge by getting the fundamentals right.

3.2.2. Historical overview of neoliberalism

In this section, I shall present a brief history of neoliberalism, based primarily on the work of Thorsen and Lie (2007). Scholars argue that the recent upsurge of literature may have alleged that neoliberalism is a new phenomenon. However, the recorded usage of the term can be traced to the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it is argued that the term appeared in an article published by the prominent French economist, Charles Gide (1922). Martinez and Garcia (2000), on the one hand, observe that the concept ‘economic liberalism’ (related to neoliberalism) prevailed in the United States from 1800 up to early 1900. Gide (1922), on the other hand, foreshadowed later usage of the term, where it is generally thought that neoliberalism is a return to the classical liberal economic theories of Adam Smith and his followers (Thorsen & Lie, 2007).

Thorsen and Lie (2007) therefore suggest that after Gide (1922), few people actually used the concept. However, when it was used it was allegedly used inconsistently, with different authors emphasising different aspects of liberalism. Significantly, the first book-length work with the term ‘neoliberalism’ in its title was Jacques Cros’ (1950) doctoral thesis, *Le néo-*

libéralisme et la révision du libéralisme'. Indeed, Cros' (1950) interpretation of neoliberalism was presented as a political ideology, which resulted from a few efforts at reinvigorating classical liberalism in the period immediately before and after World War II. Cros (1950), as quoted in Thorsen & Lie (2007:9), applauded these 'neoliberals' for seeking 'to redefine liberalism by reverting to a right-wing or laissez-faire stance on economic policy issues' and for 'speaking out against totalitarianism at a time when few did, especially among intellectuals'.

After Cros (1950), forty years elapsed in which the concept neoliberalism was allegedly infrequently used and then mainly to describe the situation after the war in Germany. In this regard, Edgar Nawroth (1961; 1962), the German social theorist and Catholic theologian, in an attempt to build in part on Cros (1950), focused his analysis of the political and economic developments of the Federal Republic around a concept of Neoliberalismus (Thorsen & Lie, 2007:9). In fact, Nawroth's (1961) studies showed that the West German Chancellors, Adenauer and Erhard, who attempted to combine a market economy with liberal democracy and some elements of 'Catholic social teaching' (Katholische Soziallehre), were allegedly described as 'neoliberals' (Thorsen & Lie, 2007:9).

Nawroth (1961), nevertheless, remained sceptical about this eclectic ideology, because he was concerned that the open-market economy inspired people to become self-centred, thus hampering their moral development. This viewpoint, Nawroth (1961) argued, could allegedly lead to the weakening of the internal solidarity of the German society. In this regard, Thorsen and Lie (2007:10) argue that Nawroth's highly conservative critique of West German 'neoliberalism' inaugurated a new tradition of using the term depreciatively. Eventually, Cros (1950) and Nawroth's (1961) concepts of neoliberalism slowly and gradually spread globally, and hence, gained prevalence during the 1990s (Thorsen & Lie, 2007:10). Its longevity showed its endurance, which probably prompted Kotz's (2000:2) comments that neoliberalism has proved to be more than just a temporary response. Actually, it outlasted right-wing political victories in the late 1970s to early 1980s in the United Kingdom under Thatcher and in the United States of America under Reagan.

However, under a Democratic Party administration in the United States of America and a Labour Party government in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, neoliberalism seemed to solidify its dominance. Given these developments, it would appear that Harvey's (2006) claim that neoliberalism swept across the world like a tidal wave of institutional reform, was justified. Indeed, Harvey (2006) holds that no place could claim total immunity from its influence. That is, with regard to education, the neoliberal pattern is, among others, to demand accountability for performance and emphasise higher education's role in the economy (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). In this regard, Brodie (2007) notes that a neoliberal

social imagination strives to embed a market logic into the everyday thinking of who we are and how we should live our lives.

However, Thorsen and Lie (2007:17), on the one hand, challenge the viewpoint that it is an open or closed question, as to whether neoliberalism is actually ‘the prevailing trend in the world’. Even 10 years later, the term is better perceived as a set of rather radical ideas which nevertheless have had a certain impact on society and politics in recent times. Nevertheless, it remains that the purported trends towards neoliberal ways of organising society ought to be studied more closely (Thorsen & Lie, 2007). However, Hanushek, Jamison, and Woessmann (2008:4) caution that ‘the more open the economy, the more important it is that a country’s students are acquiring high levels of cognitive skills’. This is a most disturbing thought, I think, considering that democratic South Africa’s lack of appropriate work skills levels of its workers corps.

I will therefore argue that, although Rizvi and Lingard (2009) contend that national governments continue to have the ultimate authority to develop their own educational policies, the nature of this authority is no longer the same. Indeed, its authority is allegedly significantly affected by imperatives of the global economy. Hence, I argue that the South African education authorities should respond by, for example, developing appropriate policies that will be conducive to promoting and establishing an efficiency regime in its educational processes and programmes. In this regard, a neoliberal rule is based on and supports each citizen’s freedom to choose while the state regulates behaviour (Fejes & Nicoll, 2008).

3.3. Efficiency discourse in education at TVET colleges

Educational literature abounds with comments and criticisms that are directed at the significance and influences that the notion ‘efficiency’ has had, specifically in educational practices, which link to the key thought that I argued in the previous sentence, that is, to develop policies that will be conducive to promoting and establishing an efficiency regime in its educational processes and programmes at, say TVET colleges. In this regard, Monk (1992) holds, on the one hand, that the concept is a disarmingly simple idea that presupposes some kind of transformation in the execution of, say, educational processes. This line of reasoning explains Monk’s (1992) argument that the concept of efficiency is allegedly often connected to a moral imperative; that is, to obtain more desired results from fewer resources, and therefore efficiency needs to be thought of as a matter of degree.

Hence, Michelli and Keiser’s (2004) claim that the focus of teaching has shifted appreciably; that is, from one perspective that regards social norms and values as a primary focus, to another, that chiefly subscribes to academic results and achievements at TVET colleges. This line of thinking would probably explain why Cloete and Moja (2005) claim that efficiency discourse, as it is articulated currently in education, is extremely narrow. McGrath (1993),

however, holds that the concept efficiency has two primary dimensions: first, an a priori systematic attempt to provide for effective planning, allocation, and management of resources to education; and second, a posteriori strategy involving the measurement of benefits that are derived from the provision of these resources.

The first point, in this regard, relates to the enforcement through government's market-oriented educational policies at reforming South Africa's educational systems, which Rizvi and Lingard (2010) contend draws the major concerns from both academia and the general public. I, however, will support such a policy focus argument given the enormous South African financial outlays on education provision. In fact, I will therefore argue that the state's high expenditure on education necessitates the implementation of efficiency targets and measures especially at TVET colleges. This line of reasoning will probably explain Boyd's (2004) note that whether educators agree or disagree, pressure for increased efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in education in the TVET sector is inevitable and will not dissipate. Hence, Welch's (1998) cautioning that there is a chill wind in the air and its name is efficiency.

I think this metaphor aptly captures the trepidation felt by the teaching fraternity, who realise stringent efficiency practices are approaching. Hence, Boyd's (2004) reference to a cult of efficiency that is unfolding with the obsession with standards, testing, accountability and regulation. One may therefore assert that this cult or efficiency movement may be predicated upon the idea that both individual worth and the worth of education can be reduced to economic terms. Therefore, if Individuals and society are seen as being rational, they will expectedly invest in education only if it delivers a higher economic rate of return than other investments (Welch, 1998). This perception is aligned with current global economic stringency according to Callahan's (1962) claim that we, the education fraternity, are pressurised into applying business and industrial values and practices in education in the pursuit of efficient targets in educational practices.

3.3.1. What is efficiency in theTVET sector education?

McGrath (1993) notes that, conceptually, efficiency refers to outputs in relation to inputs whereas, in an operational sense, it means the elimination of systemic factors that cause waste in the uses of resources or a delay in services. Nkomo *et al.* (2007: 2) supports this viewpoint and adds that efficiency in its 'pure' form means the absolute absence of any interference by any entity, including the state, in the objective of gaining the most with the least resources. In education, however, the Government Gazette (RSA, 1997a) is clear in its explanation on the issue. Indeed, the Gazette (RSA, 1997a), on the one hand, describes an efficient TVET college system or institution as one which works well without unnecessary duplication or waste, within the bounds of affordability and sustainability. In other words, it is

in not only doing what is desired or predetermined but it also includes, very specifically, the added responsibility of a minimal or even zero waste or duplication requirement. Frederickson (2010: xv), on the other hand, defines efficiency as 'achieving the most, the best, or the most preferable public services for available resources'. This definition, I argue, generally reflects people's understanding when one talks of the efficient use of their public funds.

The latter requirement, I argue, necessitates education practitioners to work more smartly with the limited (input) resources they have at their disposal. Indeed, this condition is particularly relevant to South African educational authorities, given the budget constraints that limit the availability of sufficient educational resources, especially in higher education, which now includes TVET colleges. In having said that, I shall argue that this specific focus in education is based solely on a neoliberal approach. Educational institutions are urged to achieve more with fewer resources in order to become operationally more efficient. Chapman (2002) supports this viewpoint by arguing that one of the main pressures on education managers globally, is to improve the efficiency of the education system in which they work. Unfortunately, education managers often misinterpret this as a mandate to cut costs rather than improve quality. Chapman (2002) therefore maintains that by increasing efficiency at the (feeder) school level (for TVET colleges) involves the introduction of practices aimed at improving instructional quality without a concomitant rise in costs. However, increasing efficiency presupposes that education managers should have substantial knowledge of the instructional processes.

Regrettably, two problems thwart these efforts. First, a significant percentage of front-line education administrators and managers do not fully understand efficiency or possess the know-how to improve it. Second, Chapman (2002) holds that many administrators do not have sufficient authority to initiate changes that would improve efficiency. Hence Harding (2015:1) claims that 'economic efficiency is typically defined as a Pareto optimum (state), namely, a state of affairs in which it is impossible to make anybody better-off without making somebody worse off. However, Rawls (1971) notes that a state of Pareto optimality will not necessarily guarantee a moral outcome, say, in education provision. Moreover, economic efficiency alone cannot serve as a conception of social justice. It must therefore be supplemented in some way (Harding, 2015). For example, Lefebvre and Vietorisz (2007) contended if both the government and the market are to be part of the solution, then the criteria for government efficiency and for the social efficiency of markets cannot be treated separately from each other.

In having said that, I shall draw on Viljoen's (1998:6) argument that '...one of the primary tasks of contemporary philosophy of education in South Africa entails a thorough and extensive encounter with the realities of education'. For example, Lefebvre and Vietorisz

(2007) note that social efficiency inherently makes sense only when it applies to the social, economic, political and cultural system as a whole. This, argues Viljoen (1998), is a task which will not only benefit the philosophical and educational analysis, but also the interpretation of educational realities in South Africa, which is what this study aims to do. Agabi (2012) therefore holds that the application of economic principles in the provision of education allegedly ensures adequate production of relevant human capital; that is, students as workers and, particularly, the reduction of wastage in the execution of the education and training process. There is generally a belief that efficiency is a good and worthy goal. In this regard, Fitzsimons (1999:1) holds that:

One of the features of contemporary Western society is the tendency under neoliberal philosophy to define social, economic, and political issues as problems to be resolved through management. Under neoliberalism, there is also a generalised governmental concern to promote efficiency.

This generalised concern that is referred to, exists despite efforts to improve efficiency which Monk (1992) allegedly argues will ultimately undermine the essence of high-quality education. In this regard, Monk (1992) refers to the difficulty educators allegedly experience with efficiency targets at, say, TVET colleges, which are is partially due to their misunderstanding of the concept. I am sure that the legacy of the past plays a significant role here, especially in efforts to improve the efficiency of educational systems. The constant non-availability of crucial educational resources stymies attempts to achieve this goal. In this regard, I shall support Monk's (1992) reasoning that the quest for efficiency is never-ending.

Thus, if the goal of efficiency is to obtain desirable results from fewer resources, then it is important to be clear about what is being sought. In this regard, Ball's (1995) advice is appropriate that pragmatism as a methodological lens, being practical, will provide clear goal orientation in dealing with, for example, social (educational) problems. That is because efficiency, per se, is not a simple 'yes/no' kind of phenomenon, even though Monk (1992) holds that one process may be considered as more efficient than another. However, according to the Government Gazette's (RSA, 1997a) interpretation, an efficient TVET college system or institution is one which works well without unnecessary duplication or waste. In fact, one could probably argue that it (the system) does things correctly, in terms of making optimal use of available resources and producing the desired results with the minimum waste.

Such a perception has relevance, especially in cases pertaining to 'operational' educational challenges. For example, Monk (1992) refers to the mismatch between (educational) outcomes and what is truly (officially) desired. This thinking links to the Natal Witness's article, Policy and Reality (2004:8), which reports on academic debates about the disjuncture between intended policy and actual (educational) outcomes, drawing on similar debates in

the public domain in suggesting that a chasm exists between policy and classroom realities (academic outcomes). It therefore appears that genuine concerns do exist among parents, academics, employers, politicians, and so forth, with regard to the inefficiency (in academic performances) of the education system. These concerns have surfaced in revelations about the inefficiencies in the education system that have consequently sparked new debates about the critical responsibilities of South African education.

However, my understanding of the term 'efficiency' as an educational concept is presented here by two explicit examples. First, St. Aubyn, Pina, Garcia and Pais (2009) describe efficiency as essentially a comparison between inputs used in a certain activity and the outputs produced. Stated otherwise, Lorenz (2012:604) holds that 'all notions of efficiency are derived from the notion of mechanical efficiency, the ratio of a system's work output to its work input', where the efficiency of a real system is always less than one because of friction between the moving parts. However, one cannot measure efficiency absolutely because different approaches concerning data and methodological frameworks have to be followed. For example, when a decision-making unit (DMU), such as a company, government body or educational institution, attains the maximum output level under the existing technology for a given number of inputs or resources, it is deemed efficient. In other words, it operates on a production possibility frontier which is aptly illustrated in Figure 3.1 for example, where two countries, E and D, operating with the same amount of public expenditure (as input X) are illustrated.

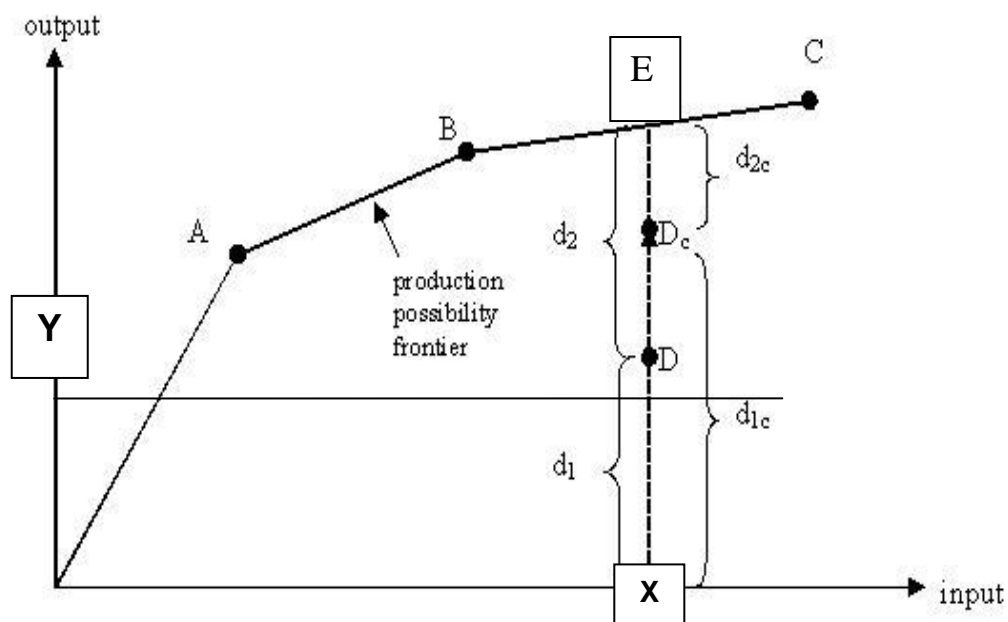


Figure 3. 1: The efficiency frontier (Production Possibility Frontier⁴) [Source: St. Aubyn, Pina, Garcia and Pais (2009:5)]

In Figure 3.1, for example, two countries, E and D, operating with the same amount of public expenditure (as input X) are illustrated. Country E is, however, achieving a higher output than country D, and it is therefore considered more efficient. However, based on such limited information, St. Aubyn *et al.* (2009) contend that country E is considered to produce on the efficiency frontier. While Country A spends less and achieves a lower output compared to B, and E respectively, all is produced on the same efficiency frontier. I shall therefore argue that the term ‘production possibility frontier’ which is interchangeably used with ‘efficiency frontier’ in this reference, is presented here by the curved line that joins sites A, B, and E.

These can be interpreted as sites where optimal (maximum) outputs are generated at maximum pass rates and/or throughput rates, given the available quantity of resources and technology (determining input factors). Sheppard & Sheppard (2012) describe the throughput rate, for example, as the percentage of students who entered this programme at TVET colleges and successfully completed it in the minimum time of three years. In this regard, Eaton, Eaton and Allen (2008) argue that, given an economy’s technology and input endowment, any output can be produced on or below the efficiency frontier (PPF), but not above the curve, where production is impossible, given the technology and input endowment. These concepts are illustrated in Figure 1 in a simplified one-input – one-output framework. Since decision-making units (DMUs) A, B, E and C are located on the production possibility frontier, they are therefore assumed to be efficient.

Whereas the DMU D is inefficient (similarly at Dc), with the level of input it uses, it produces d1 units of output. However, country D can become more efficient by raising its output to the level of country E by d2 (output-efficiency). Similarly, at Dc, output d1c is produced and requires a further d2c to reach the efficiency frontier at E. A’s possible measure of DMU D’s inefficiency is provided by the so-called output-efficiency coefficient, $(d1+d2)/d1$, which relates to the vertical distance from X to the efficiency frontier. In a similar manner, it is possible to measure an input-efficiency coefficient from D along the horizontal connecting line to the efficiency frontier before Y.

Chapman (2002) argues that, in its simplest terms, efficiency means achieving the desired goals of education, particularly at a lower cost, or achieving more of those goals without

⁴ Gottfried von Haberler (2017) introduced the production substitution curve (now referred to as the production-possibility frontier), which offered a framework for considering the effects of multiple variables in the process of production.

increasing costs, although it is not that simple in reality. McGrath (1993:3) holds ‘at the core of this concept is value for the education dollar’. In an operational sense, it means the elimination of systemic factors that cause the waste of resources or delay in the provision of services at, say, TVET colleges. In this regard, efficiency is often sought through practices that are aimed at improving instructional quality without a concomitant rise in (input) costs at, say, TVET colleges. Therefore, I agree with Marginson’s (1993:110) thinking that ‘an efficient system is one which enables given outputs to be met at the lowest possible level of inputs or cost or at a minimalist waste of resources’.

Following Marginson’s (1993) argument, one may ask: ‘How does South Africa compare regionally and internationally in terms of its education outputs and outcomes, given the availability of our resources, technological astuteness and level of economic development?’ In this regard, Sayed (2007) holds in Badat (2009:9) that South African school students perform extremely poorly in a range of international assessment tests, in terms of which ‘65% of school leavers ... are functionally illiterate’. Therefore, it is in South Africa’s interest to assess the levels of efficiency of its educational processes, as well as the effectiveness of its national education system in producing the desired or predetermined outcomes (pass and/or graduation rates). With regard to the notion of a national education system, Harris (2011) holds that an education system is based on a measurable input-output model of education and requires standardisation.

Indeed, the country spends between 5% and 6% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education. Van den Bogaerde (1972) describes the GDP as the measurement of the total value of all final goods and services produced within the frontiers of a particular country during a particular period, for example a calendar year or a quarter. It is therefore reasonable for the nation to expect at least favourable or desirable returns on its substantial spending/investment in public funds on education. McGrath (1993) therefore holds, on the one hand, that education be subjected to the same fiscal rationalisation as with all other public sector institutions; that is, with the utilisation of a more austere control regime directive in the use of discretionary public funds. However, Schwartzman (2013), on the other hand, notes that ongoing concerns about budgets and accountability have probably been accelerated to model education after the values of the free market; that is, in prioritising efficiency and customer (student) satisfaction, which has, according to Hill’s (2007) argument in Hennessy and McNamara (2013), resulted in a narrow and politicised realisation of education.

Yet, in spite of spending between 5% and 6% of GDP on education, it is still difficult to provide equal educational opportunities for all its citizens. This phenomenon can probably be attributed to the economic realities in developing countries. For example, in South Africa, Agabi (2012) holds that governments are often compelled to choose between investment

options to enhance the pace of their economic development. I shall therefore argue that these options that are available at governments' discretion should also include the improved management of their limited available financial (inputs) resources in the next section.

3.3.2. Inputs and outputs in education

The Economic Commission's (2007) publication argues that there are ways to measure the public sector's efficiency and effectiveness. Conceptually, the article claims that efficiency is the relation between input and output, with the objective of maximising output for a given input or minimizing inputs for a given output. The Government Gazette's (RSA, 1997a) description of the concept adds the crucial issues pertaining to, first, the unnecessary duplication or waste and, second, the bounds of affordability and sustainability at TVET colleges. In other words, education is expected to deliver on predetermined targets as desired, through working smartly by making optimal use of available resources. In this regard, I will refer to the students' demand for zero fees - which was the key focus of their 2016 #feesmustfall campaign.

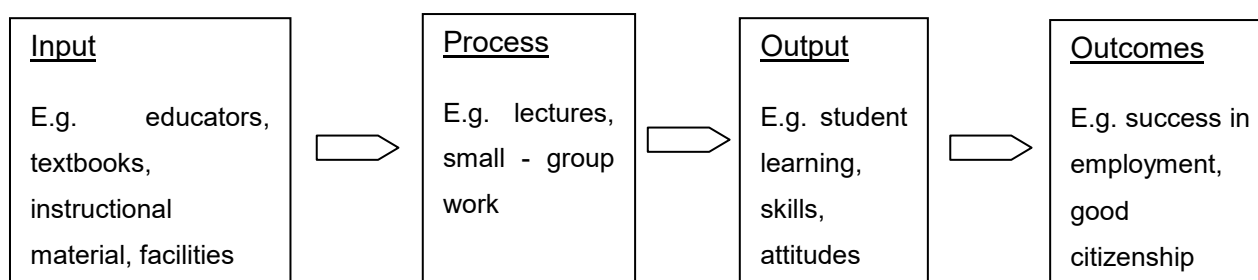


Figure 3.2: Flow diagram of the education process

Source: Chapman (2002:21)

With regard to the notion of 'effectiveness', the publication links the desired outputs to that of the final educational (real) objective(s) or, in other words; the outcomes of educational processes, at, say, TVET colleges. The latter are, inter alia, programmes such as the social welfare, growth, employment or other national priorities on which government has to deliver. Figure 3.2 for example pictures how the following notions relate within an educational delivery framework. In this case, I am referring to the following:

- Inputs - refer to resources as used in the production of education.
- Process – refers to the actual transformation of education inputs into outputs.
- Outputs – refer to the direct and immediate effects of the education process; for example, pass and throughput rates. On the one hand, Yin and Wang (nd) hold that outputs are not a simple increasing function of inputs, whereas, on the other hand, the World Bank (1980) refers to output in the sense of achievement of pupils or

students – which refers to knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes – as measured by tests and examination results.

- Outcomes – refer to the long-term impact of the education process. These are usually less direct or immediate results of schooling. In fact, they are the long-term impact of the education process and emerge from the interaction of education outputs with the broader social environment. In this regard, the World Bank (1980) refers to outcomes, in the sense of the external effects of output; that is, the ability of people to be socially and economically productive.

With regard to Figure 3.2, I argue that the South African educational authorities' major efficiency expectations pertain to its output, which is the direct and immediate effect of the education process at TVET colleges, that is, in the short-term. In this regard, I draw on Pandit's (1969:10) comment in which it is claimed that examination results are not a 'good guide for measuring the quality' of educational institutions' outputs because, the 'quality' of the graduates of education processes, I argue, would not immediately be available (that is, in terms of their skills and abilities). These results only become evident after a protracted period, even though the statistics (pass rates) are immediately available.

Educational outcomes at, say, TVET colleges, for example, present the long-term impact or consequences of an educational process, which is only revealed at a later stage in the work situation. The concepts inputs and outputs in the education process are constituent parts of a more complex concept, namely efficiency. Indeed, Windham's (1988) description of the two concepts, as argued in Dekker and Lemmer (1993), identifies, on the one hand, inputs as resources that are used in the productivity of education. These resources include, inter alia, students, educators, instruction materials, equipment and facilities. However, Hanushek and Wöfsmann (2007:14) argue that overwhelming evidence shows that expansions on the input side, such as simple physical expansions of facilities or spending per student, generally do not lead to substantial increases in their competencies and learning achievements. Outputs, on the other hand, are the direct and immediate effects of the education process and include, inter alia, indicators such as cognitive achievement, improved manual skills, attitude and behavioural changes; hence Pandit's (1969) description of output as being a reference to a quantity of knowledge absorbed and/or mental capacities developed by students during their studies at educational institutions.

In summary, I draw on Mandl, Dierx, and Ilzkovitz's (2008) claim that the distinction between output and outcome is often blurred and that output and outcome are often used interchangeably. An example is that the outputs of an education system are often measured in terms of performance or attainment rates of students of a certain age, whereas the outcome could possibly be the 'improvement' in the educational qualifications of the working-age population as a whole. Of particular interest here, I argue, is undoubtedly Cooze's (1991:

1) reference to the problem that confronts economists and educators, and that is 'how to mix the inputs in the right proportions to achieve the most efficient outcome'.

Hence, Besong's (2015) call for efficiency in the use of input's resources since the inefficient use of resources in education will result in wastage, that is, low productivity and low quality output. In this regard, Qutb (2016) holds that education should be considered as a productive investment in human capital, that is, in both external and internal efficiencies, which are among the most important considerations for public subsidisation of education.

3.3.3. External and internal efficiency at TVET colleges

Yin and Wang (2004), argue that although both the concepts of external and internal efficiency are often linked, they actually have different implications. These include the most important considerations for public subsidisation of education. For example, when governments make decisions on the public subsidisation of education, they have to be prudent, as well as being considered (Yin & Wang, 2004). Since these decisions usually involve huge public fund expenditures or investments in education at TVET colleges, they will most probably determine firstly, the speed in the development (transformation) of education as a whole, and secondly, the quality in education achieved (Yin & Wang, n.d.). Indeed, as Psacharopoulos (1985) argued in Qutb (2016:166), 'the choice of investment must, therefore, be based on an analysis of the external efficiency of all competing uses of resources'.

This line of thinking will probably explain why Lockheed and Hanushek (1994) argue that extensive consideration has been given to the issue of external efficiency or how the overall use of money for education compares to other potential public and private uses. In this regard, Besong (2014:69) notes that Akangbou (1987) holds that external efficiency in education refers to the extent to which education takes care of the broad social, economic and political goals of the society or community. This is, indeed, an important financial and educational consideration in view of the government being regarded as a rational investor in education (Yin & Wang, 2004). Indeed, this analysis of external efficiency will provide information that can probably be useful in deciding upon first, the right level of educational spending for a country, or second, the allocation of funds across different subsectors; for example, primary education or technical and vocational training, meaning which level or kinds of education should be prioritised for public spending (Yin & Wang, 2004).

In this regard, Pandit (1969) argues that external efficiency in education is achieved when the education system answers to the needs of the economy for manpower in terms of its quality and quantity. Alternatively, as Besong (2014:69) argues '... an educational system should be externally efficient if its outputs meet the needs of the society'. However, if the converse is true, that is, if the educational system does not meet its needs, society may call for a re-examination of the education system. In this regard, these are measures such as

curriculum review, improved funding, motivation, training and development of teachers, management of quality control and quality assurance, among others.

In my discussion thus far, have I concentrated on the school situation, which is outside the scope of the study, since this study concerns TVET colleges, for the following reasons. First, these poor learner performances could probably also be attributed to what Sheppard and Sheppard (2012) claim that the South African secondary education system is highly inefficient. Second, these poorly prepared, former secondary learners, are now forced, as college students to cope with the high demands of post-secondary education, say NC(V) and NATED programmes. In other words, it is expected of these poorly prepared now college students to demonstrate advanced study skills which they have never been adequately nurtured to do at the feeder school level. I therefore argue, that the poor performances could continue at TVET colleges and lead to the poor NC(V) and NATED programme results.

On this issue, the South African government news article (2015: 15) holds that effective skills development requires a holistic approach that includes continuous pathways of learning, starting with pre-school education which adequately prepares young people for secondary and higher vocational training at TVET colleges. Van der Berg (2011), however, holds that few (people) outside of policy circles are aware of the extent of the underperformance of South Africa's education system. This viewpoint is shared with Babson (2014) who claims that 20 years after the official end of apartheid, elites of all backgrounds and identities send their children to the best schools.

Indeed, this sorry state of educational performance, which Schussler referred to, is supported by the recorded data in Table 3.1 in which South Africa's poor performance in numeracy, literacy and life skills test scores of Grade 4 learners in the Monitoring, Learning and Achievement (MLA) project, is clearly reflected. In fact, these scores show that South Africa lags behind less developed regional countries in terms of its national educational performances. For example, Malawi's average for numeracy was 43% as opposed to South Africa's 30.2%. In fact, South Africa only managed to score 48.1% for literacy and 47.1% for life skills, which shows that Malawi and Botswana's education delivery processes are more efficient than South Africa's.

Table 3. 1: MLA percentage average scores for numeracy, literacy and life skills, 1999.

	Numeracy Average	Literacy Average	Life skills Average
Botswana	51.0	48.0	56.0
Madagascar	43.7	54.7	72.1
Malawi	43.0	35.0	77.0
Mali	43.6	51.8	56.9
Mauritius	58.5	61.0	58.0
Morocco	56.4	67.6	62.3
Niger	37.3	41.1	44.7
Senegal	39.7	48.9	45.7
South Africa	30.2	48.1	47.1
Tunisia	60.4	77.9	74.7
Uganda	49.3	58.7	66.8
Zambia	36.0	43.0	51.0

Source: Chinapah, V. (1999), With Africa for Africa: Towards Quality Education for all, Human Science Research Council, Pretoria; Monitoring Learning Achievements Plan, Department of Education, Pretoria.

Clearly, the poor scores of South Africa's learners are inconsistent with the level of economic development. Based on the evidence presented, Schussler's (Webb, 2007) claim that South Africa's education system leaves a lot to be desired is valid. Van der Berg and Louw (2008) share this viewpoint that South Africa's schooling system fared poorly in the efficiency rating scale with which it converts resources into learner outcomes. In this regard, Van der Berg (2011:2) holds that '[I]t is tempting to blame poverty for our weak educational performance'. However, the evidence seems to suggest otherwise; that is, even though one compares South Africa with mainly low-income countries in Africa, we still perform poorly. Clearly, such performance justifies Schussler's critical comments.

These poor outcomes that I have referred to, reflect recorded statistics over a lengthy period in democratic South African education, that is, from available statistics from 1999 up to 2011. Indeed, poor student test scores substantiate this mediocrity in students' performance on a number of occasions. First, Badat and Sayed (2014) argue that the poor quality of learning in South African schools is further evidenced by the second Annual National Assessment's (ANA) 11 results of learners' mathematics and literacy skills. These results do not augur well for South Africa's economic future development in view of Hanushek *et al.*'s (2008) research. They contend that a more direct measure of a country's human capital is the performance of students on tests in mathematics and science.

However, for South Africa's interests, the poor results indicate that grade 9 learners across the country achieved an average score of 12.7% in mathematics. Indeed, the results also imply that those learners' mathematical abilities decline steadily as they progress in school; for example, a grade 1 learner achieving an average score of 68% in the mathematics tests

and a grade 6 learner 27% (Badat & Sayed, 2014). Second, Table 3.2 below depicts grade 8 mathematics and science test scores are similar to the findings of the data in Table 3.1.

Table 3.2: Average score in the TIMSS 1999 and TIMSS 2003 grade 8 mathematics and science achievement tests.

Table 2 Average score in the TIMSS 1999 and TIMSS 2003 grade 8 mathematics and science achievement tests		
	Mathematics	Science
TIMSS 1999		
SA average score	275	243
International average	487	488
TIMSS 2003		
SA average score	264	244
International average	467	474
Source: Human Science Research Council (2004) "Performance Scores in International Maths and Science Study Reflective of South African Inequalities", media brief, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria.		

In other words, the students' performance over a number of key learning areas is consistently dismal. In this regard, South Africa's inferior performance in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) tests is poor compared to their international counterparts. Even though these two subjects generally have been identified as the key to South Africa's economic development, these scores clearly illustrate that, despite South Africa's strong economy and level of development, it nevertheless lags in its national educational performance.

I will therefore support Van der Berg's (2011:2) conclusion that 'a poor rural child in South Africa would have a better chance of performing well in a school in similar circumstances in Lesotho, Namibia or Uganda'. In fact, these countries are economically much worse off than South Africa. Indeed, these scores, as depicted in Table 3.2, clearly show that the grade 8's achievement in 1999 and 2003 in science and mathematics was disappointingly lower than the international averages. Although the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2008b) acknowledges the poor student achievements, large numbers of students have access to a basic education in South Africa. However, a significant proportion of them do not achieve at a level sufficient to acquiring basic skills that are necessary for the next phase of schooling.

Third, with regard to the 2003 TIMSS, Badat and Sayed (2014) posit that only 29% of South African eighth-grade students were able to answer a basic subtraction question correctly. Significantly, this poor showing in achievement test scores did not improve in the 2011 TIMSS, as South African learners were placed second from the bottom out of 44 countries for both mathematics and science; that is, despite having tested grade 9 learners while all

other countries tested grade 8 learners. This line of thinking clearly confirms Trevor Manuel's (Webb, 2007:11) concern that 'we don't get our money's worth on education'. This viewpoint therefore reinforces Van der Berg's (2011:2) observation that 'the enduring problems with school quality in the bulk of the education system constrain the ability to provide a pathway out of poverty for poor children'. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, this study was unable to include the outcomes of the sixth cycle 2015 TIMSS according to the four-year cycle.

In response, Crouch and Patel's (2008) comments, with regard to post-apartheid educational spending, confirmed that it had been inefficient at generating cognitive achievement, in the sense that South Africa under-produces learning results per unit of GDP. Yet reformers should bear in mind, cautioned Hanushek *et al.* (2008), that money alone will not yield the necessary improvement since many expensive attempts around the world to improve schooling have failed to yield actual improvements in student achievement. Indeed, these results confirm that education is, unlike a business, not one whose outcomes of its processes can be determined accurately. Interestingly though, Freeman (2010) points out that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) believes that the throughput rate must increase to 80%, if the system is to have a positive effect on the short-to-medium-term skill needs. This idea is particularly relevant to the target area of youth between the ages of 17 and 24 years, which the Gazette (RSA, 2008) identified as the majority of students at TVET colleges.

This thinking, I argue, is a measure to determine the so-called internal wastage problem, which is an indication of inefficiency within the educational system owing to its dropouts and/or stagnation at various levels. However, in determining an internal efficiency analysis, Yin and Wang (2004) hold that various factors need to be considered such as: first, teacher-pupil ratio; second, the qualification of teachers; third, books and other materials; fourth, equipment; and so on. Yet, with no applicable and/or consistent methods developed to judge internal efficiency, we should therefore not be surprised at this neglect in practice (Yin & Wang, 2004). This line of thinking probably explains why Yin and Wang (2004) regard such an analysis as a tough job, for it seems almost impossible to measure outputs accurately.

However, to achieve an accurate measure requires not only quantitative indicators, but also qualitative indicators. For example, if internal efficiency is low, education output (certifications/passes) may decrease, even with increased public subsidisation (Yin & Wang, n.d.). However, Besong (2014) holds that the internal efficiency of education can be measured by using cohort analysis of the educational system, whereas cohort analysis may be interpreted as the students' flow patterns through the promotion rate, repetition rate and dropout rate. For example, if it takes six years to complete the secondary school level of education under conditions of maximum efficiency, a successful completer needs six student years to complete the level (Yin & Wang, 2004). However, the more public subsidisation of

this process, the more the wastage. I therefore argue that the process is reminiscent of a financial bottomless pit; that is, when financial spending actually becomes meaningless, achieving nothing meaningful. Consequently, the internal goals of educational institutions, as well as the wider objectives of society, might be harmed.

Therefore, when one assesses the learning situation at TVET colleges, one may probably find that the educational situation is a cause for concern. This conclusion is consistent with Freeman's (2010) statement that the NC(V) [National Certificate (Vocational)] subject pass rate for 2009 was 59.7% and that of Report 191 (also called the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma or NATED courses) was 51.6%. This result is far too low for a country with South Africa's economic potential. Clearly, such results will not serve the purpose of colleges, first in skilling our youth for the purpose for which government has earmarked TVET colleges, and second, to address the poor situation to which the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) report was referring, as I discussed earlier. I will therefore support the viewpoint that the low pass rates represent unacceptable losses of skilled persons to the labour market.

In summary, I draw on Yin and Wang's (2004) reasoning in suggesting that it seems impossible to achieve a high outcome with low output, because we cannot expect to achieve external efficiency when internal efficiency is very low. This thinking aptly describes the education system's poor performances, as is reflected by its relatively poor internal and external efficiency student achievements. In fact, these results may probably be indicative of systemic ineffectiveness. Indeed, this opinion is confirmed by Van der Berg's (2011:3) warning that '... South African schools perform worse than those in many low-income African countries should be alarming to parents and policy-makers alike'. This is relevant to TVET college management, as I argued in section 3.3.3, if feeder school learners are to become college students they should, for example, be subjected to bridging courses to adequately prepare them for college studies.

3.3.4. The link between efficiency and effectiveness in education

Lockheed and Hanushek (1994:2) correctly argue that 'educational efficiency is frequently confused with educational effectiveness, and at times the two terms are (inappropriately) used interchangeably'. Efficiency, on the one hand, refers to, as said in section 3.3.2, a comparison of inputs and their related outputs at, say, TVET colleges, whereas, on the other hand, educational effectiveness is whether or not a specific set of resources has a positive effect on actual achievement and, if so, how large this effect is. A consideration that Harris (2011) raises in this regard pertains to the viewpoint that the criterion of excellence in academic work is no longer based primarily on intellectual grounds, but on what is considered relevant, what offers best value.

In this regard, efficiency and effectiveness are considered the criteria on which judgments about education are based (Harris, 2011). However, effectiveness, argue Lockheed and Hanushek (1994), does not directly compare resource uses or costs, that is, what is effective is not necessarily that which is most efficient. Nevertheless, a more efficient system obtains more output for a given set of resource inputs, or achieves comparable levels of output for fewer inputs, other things being equal. However, an evaluation of efficiency in educational systems is complicated by the fact that learners not only learn in schools, but also in their homes and on playgrounds. The same consideration, I think, should be given to student and their live experiences. I therefore share Lockheed and Hanushek's (1994) thinking that the appropriate output for efficiency considerations is the portion of student growth or development that can be reasonably attributed to specific educational experiences. In other words, these are the marginal improvements that would not have occurred without the inputs of the educational system (1994).

As I argued in section 3.3.3, a system is considered efficient and effective when it delivers graduates in the quantity and, more specifically, of the quality that meets the government's desired criteria required for a globally competitive nation. However, the Citizen newspaper headline, that stated that education 'has failed' (Webb, 2007), was not very encouraging in this regard, since it reflected negatively on the external and internal efficiency of South African education. This report, which caught many concerned South Africans' attention with its shocking headline, reported on an education system that was failing, achieving poor results despite receiving a sizeable portion of the national (limited) budget. Therefore, it is seldom easy to isolate efficiency and effectiveness. However, effectiveness is generally more difficult to assess than efficiency, since the outcome may be influenced by political considerations.

The rationale behind efficiency relates to the limited resources, that is, resources that are used to promote society's objectives as fully as possible. An example would probably include the situation at tertiary education institutions, when testing the relationship between resources used in education (increased spending) and the outcomes achieved which could be increased productivity or graduate employability. In this regard, the representation in Figure 3.3 below reflects the relationship between the key notions of efficiency and effectiveness

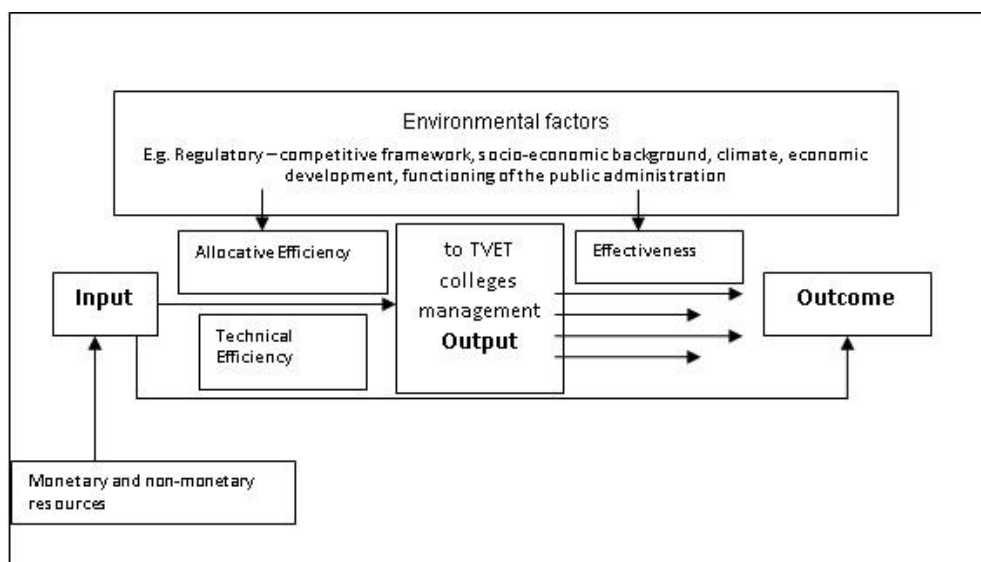


Figure 3.3: Conceptual framework of efficiency and effectiveness. [Source: Mandl, Dierx & Ilzkovitz, 2008:1].

With regard to effectiveness, in doing the right things in terms of a given frameworks (RSA, 1997a) as I argued earlier, Sheppard and Ntenga (2013) claim that an effective TVET college system is a key component of a good quality, post-school education system. This is an important point to consider, in view of the fact that the National Development Plan (NDP) recognises that further education and training (FET) can extend access to the labour market, increase labour productivity, improve other labour market outcomes (wages and employability), and so forth.

Indeed, it reflects a situation where resources are allocated so that no person is advantaged by making another person worse off (Worthington, Britton and Rees, 2001). One can therefore relate to the link between the optimal combination of inputs and the output achieved (improved pass rates and lower throughput rates). For instance, to instruct students, a combination of inputs and input processes are necessary. In this regard, I am referring to such inputs as educators, books, infrastructure, and learning, which may produce improved academic results (Mandl *et al.*, 2008). Indeed, these results may actually improve effectiveness towards long-term outcomes; for example, increased employability of youth or improved productivity. With regard to technical efficiency, Lockheed and Hanushek (1994: 14) contend that, given the current state of technology, '[t]echnical inefficiency, which is essentially the wastage of specific resources, makes it difficult to evaluate the potential advantages of different policies'.

Even though technical efficiency may be difficult to establish, it is still necessary, according to Lawton (1995), to do so. In this regard, Lawton (1995) holds that, for education systems to retain their legitimacy, they must be viewed as being effective in terms of the outcomes that are produced via this system. For example, it could be said that South Africa's education

system is both inefficient and ineffective. This conclusion is based on the low scores (outputs) that were recorded by South African students in numeracy, literacy and life skills tests which are indicative of the inefficiencies in the educational processes. In this regard, Sheppard and Sheppard (2012:101) posit that ‘the FET colleges are very inefficient in terms of success [passes] and throughput rates, as low as 4% in 2009, and the graduation rate was about 40% over the period 2007 to 2010’. These outcomes will probably serve as a strong motivation for the nation to pursue, judiciously, efficiency targets in their management of their scarce resources. In fact, such poor performances are indicative of internal and external inefficiencies within South Africa’s education system.

These findings confirm Arndt’s (1929:12) claim that ‘... things must be judged by their outcome - what works is right’ which is most definitely not the case being referred to here. In having now established the significance of targeting efficiency and effectiveness practices in education delivery, the question that I now have to respond to concerns how TVET colleges should actually be managed? In this regard, it is to be expected that government will react appropriately, since Lynch (2014) holds that how Foucault’s analysis of power is exercised has greatly enhanced understanding of the way control and regulation is exercised. That is, considering that Frederickson (2010: 48) wrote that ‘the most productive governments, the most efficient governments, and the most economising governments can still be perpetuating poverty, inequality of opportunity and injustices’ (to be discussed in Chapter 4).

3.3.5. Issues in the management of TVET institutions

In sections 1.2 and 3.1, I argued about a new reality that was created and set in motion by the GEAR strategy’s implementation, which was how things in education ought to be done in a post-apartheid era and, more importantly, to be accounted for. With regard to the concept of management, it is described in the World Book Dictionary (1985:1263) as ‘a handling; control; direction, guidance or regulation’ activity. Similarly, Akoojee and McGrath (2004:27)) were quite clear on the matter that GEAR was ‘designed to ensure South Africa’s competitiveness and insertion into the global economy’. In this regard, a guidance or regulation or even control activity explains, according to Lynch’s (2014) note why theorists of managerialism regard management as a political and not merely a technical activity. In fact, it is best understood as an ideological configuration of ideas and practices brought to bear on a public service organisation, such as education.

It is the management and delivery of education with a view of aligning education’s organisational practices with those as practised in the market (private sector) system which raises an issue. This issue is a crucial consideration, especially in a rapidly changing socio-economic climate. I am referring here to Agabi’s (2012:4) note that ‘the application of prudential principles [the how] in resource utilisation in the practice of education ensures that

investment in education produces a desired labour force that is relevant to the economy in terms of quality and quantity'. In this regard, Hattingh (2012) holds that a great deal of effort and especially money was earmarked specifically for developing the skills base, in terms of the quality and quantity of workers in the post-apartheid skills development system.

This means that educational spending will have to be justified by the educational returns, in terms of its desired output (passes and graduates) performances that public institutions deliver at TVET colleges. This is a key national policy focus, and cannot be divorced from supposedly similar national functional sectors' targets of government, for example health or labour, amongst others. In this regard, Birnbaum (1988) holds that a new approach to education management underlines government's commitment to addressing (curbing) public spending at, say, TVET colleges. Indeed, these bureaucracies were allegedly regarded as being too rigid and wasteful entities in addition to being too slow in their responses to efforts of transformation. Birnbaum (1988), however, notes that a new approach to education management underlines government's commitment to addressing (curtailing) public spending at public institutional bureaucracies such as TVET colleges.

3.3.5.1. Accountability in education

Morrow (2009:4) holds that 'if I am accountable for something then I am obliged to provide a justification for what I do in relation to it', whereas the government's interpretation, as reflected in the Gazette (RSA, 1997a :14), notes that 'the principle of public accountability bears upon decision-making, the spending of funds and the achievement of results'. On the other hand, Elmore (2004:1), a professor at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, argues that '[a]ccountability for student performance is one of the two or three - if not the most - prominent issues in policy at the state and local levels right now'. Moreover, this push for accountability has grown out of a common perception that states traditionally monitor the inputs in public education, such as the number of computers in the classroom, but have paid too little attention to performance (Elmore, 2004).

These interpretations of the concept link to Johns *et al.*'s (1983) thinking that the concept 'accountability' for education has been generally accepted during the past few years as useful and appropriate. The primary reason for this is, first, that accountability directs attention to the results of the educational process rather than to its components; second, it attempts to fix responsibility for these results; and third, it is concerned with the consequences of the results, which are whether the results represent poor, fair or satisfactory progress. Dissatisfaction with higher education has in recent times - along with other public entities including government and policy makers - been decreasing public trust, which raises concern. As Leveille (2006) argues, with distrust comes suspicion, and where there is suspicion, control and regulation enter the picture, accompanied by limitations on

budgets, budgetary-control language and challenges to all current practices. In fact, such public dissatisfaction could lead to public disobedience, which may lead to civil (student) protest action, reminding government of its commitment to assist the poor.

Policy makers and educational leaders are therefore urged to agree on the urgency in dealing with accountability issues. Indeed, Leveille (2006) holds that a pre-emptive initiative is required to ensure that the public interest is served in a timely and informed way since accountability practices in higher education have increasingly been a national issue over the past decade or more. Hanushek and Wößmann (2007), in particular, advise that evidence produced in the United States of America indicates that strong accountability systems lead to better student performances (efficiency) which speaks to social justice. It can therefore be argued that the need for accountability was spurred on by rising TVET college costs, disappointing retention and graduation rates, and, more specifically, employer concerns. These issues suggest that: first, graduates do not have the knowledge and skills expected in the workplace, and second, questions have been raised about the learning and value that higher education provides to students.

This line of thinking links to Carnoy's (2008) argument, that one of the largest expenditures that a modern nation makes, is on the education of its people. It would therefore be normal to expect a nation to demand tangible, that is, verifiable results from those who are authorised to spend the public funds. According to Van der Berg and Louw's (2008) thinking, it adds up to approximately 6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - that is, the total value of all final goods and services produced annually within the borders of a country (Van den Bogaerde, 1972). In this regard, the OECD (2008b) publication informs us that the department of education's expenditure in 2006/07 comprised 5.3% of GDP, whereas the percentage expenditure figures for the 2013 and 2014 periods were recorded at 6% and 6.06% respectively. These statistics, in addition to the contributions that the government makes towards the NSFAS, which Branson *et al.* (2015:45) note 'increased 10-fold between 1996 and 2011', clearly shows its commitment to assist low-income students.

Such huge educational outlays surely support Johns *et al.*'s (1983) argument that it is now politically popular for politicians to advocate accountability; since, by accountability, they actually meant educators should be held accountable for their learners' learning (progress) regardless of learners' abilities, efforts, socio-economic background and influences of peer group. This evokes, on the one hand, a metaphor of 'throwing money into a bottomless pit,' meaning that one cannot solve an education problem solely by providing funding. However, Hanushek and Wößmann (2007) contend, on the other hand, that there is no relationship between spending and student performance. This means that just increasing spending within current education systems in developing countries is unlikely to improve student performance

substantially. This justifies Trevor Manuel's statement, '[w]e don't get our money's worth on education' (Webb, 2007:11).

Although South Africa can be considered to be one of the world's most noted investors in education, it has one of the poorest-performing education systems in the world. In other words, the availability of sufficient funds does not necessarily contribute towards good performance. The problem therefore should lie elsewhere, most probably at the efficiency with which educational processes are executed. Such an educational situation is most definitely not in the best interests of the nation and the status quo should not be allowed to continue (Webb, 2007). This nation therefore can and should insist on demanding greater accountability from government and colleges, given the substantial investment (through spending) in education, which provides the nation with the right to demand quality return (outputs) on this spending. In other words, there needs to be confidence in the reliability of the facts on which to base one's future decision-making or planning, for example. Hence, responsibility is increasingly achieved by accountability systems that are imposed on colleges and are designed to track various types of outcomes defined as critical indicators of customer (student) satisfaction.

Taken alone, accountability is not inherently bad or detrimental to colleges. Indeed, given the fact that these institutions are funded so heavily with public monies, it makes good sense to track the ability of colleges to meet the needs of their intended customers [or students] (Shaw & Rab, 2003). Hence, Lipman's (2004:46) argument that accountability policies allegedly constitute an insidious mode of social discipline that merges Foucault's 1995 [1977] notion of discipline as 'spectacle and discipline as surveillance'. In other words, it represents social control through the observation of the few by the many. This viewpoint is shared by Johns *et al.* (1983:360) who argue that 'classroom educators are generally opposed to the accountability movement because in many cases they have been victimised by it'. Nevertheless, if the accountability movement is instrumental in causing parents, the community and the students to assume their share of accountability for college learning, then the movement will have been worthwhile (Johns *et al.*, 1983).

If that is the case, I shall support Hanushek and Wöfsmann's (2007:21) suggestion that 'if schools are to be held responsible for results, they must have the ability to make decisions that will lead to better outcomes'. This viewpoint probably explains Lipman's (2004) claim that ideologically, accountability reframes education as performance on achievement tests, therefore undermining its broad and more liberal purposes. This line of reasoning links to Fuhrman's (1999) comment that the new accountability focuses, among others, on student performance(s), public reporting of achievements results and continuous improvement. This issue will be discussed in the following sub-section.

3.3.5.2. Performativity in Education

For conceptual clarification, I draw on Berns' (2013) explanation that the terms performativity and performance are derived from the verb to perform, since they denote the capacity to execute an action, to actually carry something out, as well as to do something according to a prescribed ritual. Perryman (2006) contends, from an educational perspective, that performativity relates to increased accountability and surveillance under which educators find themselves and their colleges judged in terms of outcomes and performance. Sadly, they become prisoners of their own vigilance, which means they constantly see what Clarke and Newman (1997: xiii) call the 'absent presence' of authoritarian control.

Ball's (2000) interpretation of the concept is more appropriate for the purpose of this study. Indeed, his working definition of performativity relates to a much broader field of neoliberal influences. He regards performativity as a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation, or a system of terror that 'employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of control, attrition and change' (Ball, 2000:1). The performances of individual subjects or organisations serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of quality, or moments of promotion or inspection. Avis (2003:324), on the one hand, compares the demands of performativity with Fordist work relations in which 'the worker is tightly surveyed, with attempts to render the details of their practice transparent'. Significantly, performativity, on the other hand, appears to have created a blame culture in which institutions call its members to account.

For example, Govender (2007) reports, in a Sunday Times article, that 'the state will nail parents for their children's bad school results. This viewpoint probably explains Perryman's (2006) thinking that performativity is linked with the increased accountability and surveillance under which educators find themselves and their schools being judged in terms of outcome and performance. I shall therefore draw on Foucault's (1979:59) argument that 'we always find power as something which 'runs through' it, that acts, that brings about effects'. This means, inter alia that the state is holding others responsible for its own policy failure and therefore, according to Lipman (2004), it passes on the blame. This is what I shall call a punitive situation that has been enforced through surveillance and the imposition of tightly monitored testing of chunks of knowledge deemed as suitable and conservative enough to advance the dominant (neoliberal) culture (Hennessy & McNamara, 2013).

By pressuring educators to conform to the dictates of neo-liberalism and corporate hegemony, has resulted in a narrow and politicised realisation of education at, for example, college level. In this regard, Ball (2000) notes that it is not that performativity gets in the way of real academic work, it is a vehicle for changing what academic work is. For example, Hennessy and McNamara (2013:9) hold that Darling-Hammond (1985) argues that they

(educators) resort to lectures rather than facilitating classroom discussions in order to cover the prescribed behavioural objectives without getting 'off the track'. In this regard, Ball (2000) holds that within the framework of performativity, academics and educators are encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who add value to themselves, improving their productivity; that is, to be more creative and/or innovative in how they perform their duties.

It therefore appears as if this unrelenting focus on standards, rubrics and measurement has meant that, in many cases, the deeper problems of teaching go unattended, according to Hennessy and McNamara (2011), which is a lack of higher-order engagement and critical thinking. Indeed, they contend that the demands of meeting the requirements of an education system privileging technicism and exam performance fail to provide the space necessary for critical encounters with the subject matter (Hennessy & McNamara, 2013). It therefore appears that as examination grades increase, the value of what we are testing, or are supposed to be testing, and the educational challenge presented therein, may be concurrently in a decline (Hennessy & McNamara, 2013). This is a viewpoint that relates to McDermott, Henchy, Meade and Golden's (2007) note, as argued in Hennessy and McNamara (2013), that in a performance-oriented culture, there is pressure on, among others, individuals and organisations to engage in work that is visible and measurable, so that one can be compared to another.

In response to this observation, I argue that this circumstance has led to a disturbing situation in education, which Perryman (2006:155) refers to as 'panoptic performativity'. In this regard, Lipman (2004) notes that accountability works as a panoptic system of surveillance that teaches educators to comply and press others into compliance. Consequently, they may perform according to the norms dictated by the inspection regime to escape its surveillance. What actually happens, on the one hand, is that educators and students learn to behave as if they were being inspected all the time (Perryman, 2006). Wickham (1986), on the other hand, holds that Foucault argued strongly that power in its modern form functions so efficiently by working on individuals.

This line of thinking links to Leveille's (2006) claim that in recent times higher education is facing public distrust. However, as I previously argued, with distrust comes suspicion, followed by control and regulation entering the picture (Leveille, 2006). This thinking probably explains why society is re-examining the relative value of a college education. In this regard, Leveille (2006) holds that public scepticism exists which is aimed at higher education qualifications, because a college or university qualification no longer assures a job in a desired field. In the following section, I will be exploring management-related practices at colleges, targeting the improvement of education results.

3.3.5.3 . Managerialism in TVET college education

The concept of 'managerialism has had a profound influence on the management and orientation of education over the last two decades of the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first', argues Lynch (2014:7). Trow (1994:7), on the one hand, holds that the matter of 'managerialism' is '...not just a concern for the effective management of a specific fact, [but] the term represents an ideology, a belief in the truth of a set of ideas, which are independent of specific situations (Trow,1994). This explanation, however, does not pinpoint how managerialism relates to education. On the other hand, Lynch (2014:6) holds that 'managerialism is the organisational form aligned with neoliberalism'.

However, Clarke and Newman (1997) posit that managerialism simply cannot be reduced to a series of management practices and activities because, it (managerialism) is embedded in a complex series of social, political and economic organisational changes that are tied to neoliberalism as a political project (Lynch, 2014). Moreover, it rests on the neoliberal assumption that the market is the primary producer of cultural logic and value and that solutions to societal ills and the management of social change can be best understood through the deployment of market logic and market mechanisms (Lynch, 2014). In fact, Down, Hogan and Chadbourne (1999) contend that one of the hallmarks of contemporary managerialist discourse is its tendency to define social, and by implication, educational, economic or political issues as management problems.

Fitzsimons (1999:1) notes that the restructuring of education involves reforms of education in which there has been a significant shift away from an emphasis on administration and policy to an emphasis on management. In this regard, Wickham (1979) holds that it is around a particular operational policy that an intersection of practices can be said to exist. For example, education, also known as New Public Management (NPM), is characterised by a combination of free market rhetoric and intensive managerial control practice. The reason for this is that, under a NPM regime, an elaboration of explicit standards and measures of performance in quantitative terms are used that set specific targets for personnel, with an emphasis on economic rewards and sanctions, and a reconstruction of accountability relationships. Indeed, its alleged impact is said to be greatest in higher education where there has been a global movement to turn higher education into a marketable commodity that can be traded internationally (Lynch, 2014).

So what does managerialism or NPM represent? Gelbmann (2005) notes that managerialism in education allegedly instils in people a one-dimensional thinking that would demand unconditional compliance from workers (educators) at educational institutions. In this regard, Gelbmann (2005) contends that a managerialism regime in education cannot tolerate disobedient educators, meaning educators that loudly say 'no' to certain changes. In this

regard, Foucault (1979: 60) holds that 'power is never monolithic. It is never completely controlled from one point of view'. Viewed from a worker's perspective, Gelbmann (2005) claims that managerialism serves, to a large degree, the promotion of managers at the expense of those who are managed (educators). In this regard, Lorenz (2012:600) notes that neoliberal policies in the public sector, also known as NPM, are characterised by a combination of free-market rhetoric and intensive managerial control practices.

However, Lynch (2014) argues that in managing a college, it would require many skills, some of which are purely technical, such as budget and time management, personnel relations and so forth. Others are unique to education, especially in the development and nurturing of skills that students require, enabling them to grow and develop and to support educators in this task. On the one hand Hanushek and Wößmann (2007) argue, as previously stated, that it is difficult to have a well-functioning education system without a supportive institutional structure, whereas, on the other hand, Lipman (2004) notes that in neoliberal education discourses, educators are blamed for the state's policy-related errors in education. This practice could probably have contributed to the unbearable tension that educators experience - hence their alleged low morale. This situation, I argue, is probably exacerbated by a very disturbing thought from a South African perspective, that Lorenz (2012:606) raised, that 'increasing student debt and decreasing faculty income therefore are direct consequences of NPM policies'.

However, Lorenz (2012:606) holds that there are not substantial aims at all behind NPM policy, because each cut in spending is simply a springboard to the next. Efficient, therefore, is never efficient enough. For greater clarity on managerialism, in a practical sense, as applied to British institutions of higher education, it takes two forms: that is, a soft and hard concept. With regard to the soft concept, Trow (1994) holds that this approach focuses on the idea of improving the efficiency of the existing education institutions. The hard concept, argues Trow (1994), involves the imposition of discourses and techniques of reward and punishment for those employees that management considers to be untrustworthy and therefore incapable of change. In this regard, Foucault (1980) argues that there are no relations of power without resistance, and the latter is more real and effective because it is formed at the point where power is actually exercised.

Therefore, supporters of this hard approach argue that higher education must be reshaped and reformed by the introduction of management systems, which, according to Trow (1994), involve the creation of performance criteria; that is, rules of reporting and accountability necessary for the assessment of the system. However, Soares *et al.* (2016) contend that college and university leaders will need to engage in the hard work of extracting actionable information from the data in their information systems. This capability will lead their faculty and staff to understand and articulate the real relationships between their inputs and outputs

as an organisation, and then execute informed decisions driven by mission, quality, cost, and revenue considerations.

In summary, Down *et al.* (1999) claim that effectiveness and efficiency are about the means of control and the manipulation of human beings (educators) into compliant patterns of behaviour. However, in view of the substantial investments in education, the nation reserves the right to demand accountability, which probably means first, tangible verifiable results, such as improved pass and throughput rates in education. Second, in this regard, Akoojee and McGrath (2003) argue that public spending should not be wasteful and inefficient, especially spending for educational purposes. Managerial methods must therefore be used, which place accountability at the feet of institutions and its educators, which I think count among the many challenges that TVET colleges need to negotiate (Hennessy & McNamara, 2013).

3.4. Challenges confronting TVET colleges

Giroux (2010:1) notes that the market-driven logic of neoliberal capitalism continues to devalue all aspects of the public good (education). Of particular interest is the viewpoint that one of the consequences of neoliberal capitalism is the educational concern for excellence that appears to have been divorced from equity matters. I am specifically referring to the quantity of college or school outputs (passes) that are regarded as more important than the quality of such passes. Lipman's (2011:3) description of neoliberal restructuring of public education aptly captures situations that South African educators have been subjected to. I am referring particularly to such extremes as: first, the closing of 'failing' public schools/colleges or handing them to corporate-style 'turnaround' organisations, and, second, the enforcing of top-down accountability and incentivised performance targets on schools, colleges and educators.

These have been a relatively recent practice in education administration or the department of education's coordinated policy (Rationalisation & Redeployment) of reduction in teaching staff that has, according to Akoojee and McGrath (2004), impacted negatively on the quality of the system. Donaldson (2008) concurs by arguing that there are widespread concerns about the quality of education and its adequacy in relation to economic and social needs. This thought underlines a vigorous debate throughout the world about the need to improve education. This thinking is relevant to the South African context, where substantial improvement to education delivery will have to be made to, first, enhance the nation's competitiveness on world markets, and second, to improve domestic employment and productivity levels. In addition to the previous thought, Akoojee and McGrath (2004) argue that although GEAR was introduced to enhance fiscal discipline to the provision of education,

it nevertheless led directly to depressed public expenditure resulting in poor outcomes in quality and quantity.

This observation is, in fact, acknowledged in the White Paper (RSA, 2013) for post-school education and training by admitting that the quality of leadership is not as good as is required in all colleges. Indeed, the White Paper (RSA, 2013) has acknowledged that South Africa has some excellent colleges, although a large number function at a level that is well below what is necessary. Furthermore, the College Audit report (2011) also claimed that there has been inadequate compliance with the Further Education and Training Act of 2006, particularly in terms of policies, plans and procedures and the establishment of governance structures (Cosser, Kraak & Winnaar., 2011). One could therefore argue that priority should be given to colleges to ensure that they achieve the level of functionality required for improved performance and accountability (RSA, 2013).

This line of thinking would probably explain why post-secondary educational institutions are being called on to provide factual evidence that they and their programmes are providing the benefits that were intended and that these outcomes are being produced in a cost-effective manner (Leveille, 2006). Indeed, the performance of institutions of learning in the FET and General Education and Training GET sectors were noted in Manuel's response to the poor matric pass rates (Webb, 2007) and Freeman's (2010) reference to poor TVET college results. As I mentioned earlier, higher education, along with other public entities, including government and policy makers, is facing public dissatisfaction and a reduction of public trust (Leveille, 2006). It is therefore expected that policy makers, and educational leaders first, need to agree on the urgency of dealing with the accountability issue and, second, ensuring that the public interest is served in a timely and informed way (Leveille, 2006).

As I mentioned earlier, the quality of college leadership is questionable. This is problematic, considering that colleges' leadership at council and management levels is vital for ensuring a systemic transformation. It is therefore important for college leadership to be effective, efficient, dedicated and motivated. This is crucial if colleges are to provide the quality of education and training required by the hundreds of thousands of students (RSA, 2013). In other words, colleges will have to be, among others, responsive to first, its own operational needs, and second, to the needs of the economy, by imparting skills to the nation's unemployed youth (RSA, 2013). For example, the number of youth in the age 15 to 24 range comprises 3.4 million young people, who are not in education nor employment, referred to as NEETs (Cloete, 2009), a situation which has to be addressed before it actually threatens the stability of our democracy (RSA, 2013).

Based on such statistics, one tends to share Manuel's concern that, first, educational results do not actually reflect the substantial investment of public funds in education and second,

that the nation does not receive reciprocal value from this investment. Schools and colleges therefore need to improve the efficiency of their outputs (that is, pass and throughput rates) and, more importantly, improve the quality of these passes. I shall therefore argue that these institutions should employ strategies (interventions) to improve their external efficiency, in terms of improving, first, the quality and, second, the quantity of such graduate output. In addition to these, third, institutional internal efficiency must be improved by providing value for money (improved pass rates) invested in education programmes.

Given South Africa's experiences with education systems during the apartheid era and, more recently, our operational experiences with the failed Outcome Based Education (OBE), one may probably have some difficulty in knowing what precisely needs to be done in education policymaking. In this regard, Jansen (2002b) holds that every education policy made demonstrates the state's pre-occupation with settling policy struggles in the political domain rather than in practice. For example, the political and/or economic demand for skilled workers led to a quantitative expansion in education, which consequently led to an increased strain on the limited educational resources to sustain the (skilling) strategy.

This is an important argument when viewed against Swarts' (2000) reasoning that the world in which colleges exist is changing at a rapid rate. Nevertheless, Christie's (2003) advice seems plausible that, although the state's macroeconomic policies have been geared towards fiscal austerity, a fine balance needs to exist between what policy advocates and the educational needs on the ground. In other words, a balance has to be established between whatever social needs or challenges may exist on the ground versus the demands that neoliberal-inspired policy directives require in order for educational practices to achieve higher levels of efficiency.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter explored discourses of efficiency associated with neoliberalism as reflected in the main research question. This approach was necessitated, as Van der Berg (2011) notes, since few outside of policy circles are aware of the extent of the underperformance of South Africa's education system. For example, real life educational international assessment tests confirm South African learners coming last of the 40 countries tested. These learners are however, representatives of the feeder group for TVET colleges, Sayed (2007) referred to them as being 65% functionally illiterate, that will attend the TVET colleges as students after completing their secondary studies.

Chapman (2002) therefore rightly argued that one of the main pressures on education especially at TVET colleges, was to improve the efficiency levels of the education system in which they work. In fact, the neoliberal, philosophical approach requires that educational institutions achieve more with fewer resources in order to become operationally more

efficient. Frederickson (2010) therefore pointed out that it meant achieving the most, the best or the most preferable public services from the available resources.

In this regard, this study is focused on the influences and consequences that the pursuit of efficiency has had in shaping educational practices at TVET colleges showed poor student and learner recorded performances. Educators would therefore have to work smarter in order to produce better passes or graduate rates with the few resources they had at their disposal, which meant they had to be accountable. These pressures on educators and students to be accountable by producing at higher performance levels, allegedly influence their rights to social justice, which will be discussed in Chapter 4 where I will unpack the social justice educational discourses to ascertain how policies are targeted to achieve the desired social transformation at TVET colleges as referred to in the research question.

Chapter 4

Social justice at South African TVET colleges

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, my focus was centred on the specific relationship that exists between education and the efficiency discourse with which the education function is executed at Technical Vocational Educational and Training (TVET) colleges. In this chapter, my focus shifts to exploring the notion of social justice in TVET college education processes which is one of the main policy targets of the ANC government as is reflected in the research questions. As I argued in section 1.3, Dewey (1923) claims that when we experience something, we respond to it. However, we suffer or undergo the consequences that follow policy demands in education.

Badat and Sayed (2014:130) however contend that the 1996 South African Constitution which 'is supported by the Bill of Rights' unambiguous proclamation that individuals and the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on the basis of race, gender, sex and so forth'. This perspective therefore requires that the notions of equality, equity and redress of past transgressions in education, particularly at TVET colleges, be adequately addressed. In addition, the 'quality issue' in education, particularly how it relates to the other social notions and how it influences TVET colleges' practices, will also be investigated. In fact, these constitutional commitments that are being referred to, are captured in an earlier White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995) that directed the state to redress educational inequalities. It will first be explored with examples of social justice practices in general. Thereafter, a more exclusive focus will be directed at social practices experienced at South African TVET colleges.

In having said that, Badat and Sayed (2014) contend that a good public education is critical for social justice in and through education. I will therefore have to clarify what is generally meant by the notion of social justice as is practiced at TVET colleges.

4.2. Conceptualising social justice

In this section, I draw attention to Griffith's (2003) claim that both social justice and education are extremely complicated concepts, given their web of interconnections, many levels and unknowns. In this regard, Leistyana (2009:51) notes that 'it is important to note social justice has no fixed definition', Robinson (2016:1) argues that, according to Rawls (2003), a theory of social justice is commonly referred to as 'justice as fairness'. Hence, even though the

concept of social justice is frequently invoked, it has proven difficult to define or to characterise. Indeed, Brodie (2007) holds that the concept of social justice is frequently deployed, if not as a universally intelligible and applicable term, then, at least as an imperative of social organisation. Nevertheless, Boyles, Carusi and Attick (2009) claim that the meaning of social justice is challenging because of its disparate uses across diverse views.

As I stated in section 1.2 for this study, Robinson's (2016:1) brief description will suffice as a working definition, from an operational point of view, that social justice means '... promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity'. Badat and Sayed (2014:141), however, raise a rather disturbing thought by arguing that 'the pursuit of social equity, redress, and quality in higher education simultaneously, such as at TVET colleges, in the context of inadequate public financing, poses a difficulty'. I also share their concern that an exclusive concentration (of government funding) on social equity may probably lead to its unadulterated privileging at the expense of economic development and quality. Despite these scholars arguing about the meaning of social justice, I maintain that one cannot really talk about social justice without providing a brief exposition of Rawls' views (1971). Indeed, Rawls (1971:3) holds that 'justice is the first virtue of social institutions (for example, schools, colleges and so forth) as truth is of systems of thought'. More importantly, he argues that a theory, however elegant and economical, must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise, laws and institutions - no matter how efficient and how well-arranged - must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust (Rawls, 1971).

What this study therefore proposes is captured in Rawls' (1971:3) comment that 'each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override'. However, an injustice is tolerable only when it is necessary to avoid an even greater injustice. Thus, with regard to 'being first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising' (Rawls, 1971:4). Therefore, institutions are said to be 'just' when no arbitrary distinctions are made between persons in the assigning of basic rights and duties, and when the rules determine a proper balance between competing claims to the advantages of social life. In this regard, Rawls (1971:5) argues that 'we cannot, in general, assess a conception of justice by its distributive role alone, however useful this role may be in identifying the concept of justice'. In other words, we must take into account its wider connections, that is, all being equal, one conception of justice is preferable to another when its broader consequences are more desirable. In this regard, Robinson (2016) argues that Rawls regarded social justice as being about assuring the protection of equal access to liberties, rights and opportunities, as well as taking care of the least advantaged members of society.

In fact, according to Rawls (1971:7), ‘many different kinds of things are said to be just and unjust: not only laws, institutions, and social systems, but also particular actions of many kinds, including decisions, judgments’. Thus, whether something is just or unjust, according to Robinson (2016), depends on whether it promotes or hinders, among others, equality of access to liberties, human rights and opportunities. Indeed, it is these principles that regulate the choice of a political constitution and the main elements of the economic and social system. This means that ‘the justice of a social scheme depends essentially on how fundamental rights and duties are assigned and on the economic opportunities and social conditions in the various sectors of society’ (Rawls, 1971:7). For example, some education institutions of society may favour certain starting places over others, therefore creating in the process particularly deep inequalities that affect men’s initial chances in life.

Indeed, it is these inequalities, presumably inevitable, in the basic structure of any society, to which the principles of social justice must comply (Rawls, 1971). Indeed, for us, the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions, that is, the political constitution and the principal economic and social arrangements, distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation (Rawls, 1971). According to Robinson’s (2016) claim, Rawls’ conception of social justice has developed around the idea of a social contract, whereby people freely enter into an agreement to follow certain rules for the betterment of everyone. For example, during the 1960s and 1970s, Taylor *et al.* (1997) claimed that such action led to the creation of various programmes of affirmative action as well as some redistributive policies. Such policies were also produced and implemented in South African public institutions.

Taylor *et al.* (1997) hold that Nozick (1976) opposes Rawls’ (1971) viewpoint by arguing that Rawls’ theory is mistaken in focusing attention on the issue of distribution and thus ignores the issue of people’s entitlements to what they produce. Despite these differences, both assume that people always act in their own self-interest and consider individualistic liberty as a value prior to any consideration of social justice. Hereafter follows a revised statement of the two principles according to Kelly’s (2001:42) edited version of John Rawls’ *Justice as Fairness* (1985):

- (i) Each person has the same inalienable claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all (equality principle); and
- (ii) Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit to the least-advantaged members of society (difference principle or maximum principle).

According to Rawls, argues Robinson (2016), these principles are ordered, meaning the first principle (the equal liberties principle) should first be achieved before efforts are made to achieve the second principle. In this regard, Taylor *et al.* (1997) contend that the first principle covers individual freedom, in other words, it covers the constitutional essentials. Hence, Rawls' further explanation that the priority of equality means that the second principle is always to be applied within the setting of institutions that satisfy the requirements of the first principle. Indeed, the second principle suggests that the state has a special responsibility to create policy initiatives and programmes that are directed at removing barriers arising from unequal power relations and preventing equity, access and participation. In other words, the second principle therefore requires, according to Kelly (2001), fair equality of opportunity and that social and economic inequality be governed by the difference principle.

This thinking implies that government is justified in implementing policies that fairly discriminate in favour of certain disadvantaged groups; for example, affirmative action policies to promote equality. In this regard, on the one hand, the difference principles thus hold that governments should have policies that distribute benefits equally, even if it means advantaging the least-advantaged. Other scholars, such as Pendlebury and Enslin (2004), express the view that social justice is understood generally as a matter of distributive justice. This viewpoint is also shared by Miller (2003), according to Robinson (2016), who argues that social justice deals with the distribution of good (advantages) and bad (disadvantages) in society, and more specifically with how these things should be distributed within society.

Another perspective on social justice is presented by Hursh's (2009) article. In this article, Hursh (2009) draws attention to Levitas' (1998) argument that social justice requires that inequalities be minimised through social programmes and the redistribution of resources and power that is in line with Rawls's difference principle. A number of other writers share this viewpoint, notably Pendlebury and Enslin (2004). Hursh (2009:155), however, holds that 'inequality is the product of individual choice and should not be remedied by social welfare programmes, but by individuals taking more responsibility and striving to become productive members of the workforce'. Such a perception probably explains why, in Hursh's (2009:155) viewpoint, neoliberal societies aim to create competitive, rational individuals who can compete in the marketplace, and who 'are to become entrepreneurs responsible for themselves, their progress, and their position'.

In South Africa, with its millions of unemployed, under-skilled workers, such a rationale driving government's implementation of market-oriented policies preferably should be complemented by strategies that promote social justice at the work place. It cannot be an 'either/or' situation for the government, but a commitment by the state to find a strategy or approach that will enable them to pursue both targets simultaneously. That is, the state must establish the economic conditions, for example, high productivity and economic growth,

without compromising the social circumstances that lead to the promotion of social justice practices in the public sector and workplace. Hursh (2009), however, contends that neoliberal (market-oriented) governments accept little responsibility for the welfare of individuals who are held to be the authors of their own fortune or misfortune.

I refer specifically to the state's implementation of market-oriented policies (to be discussed in Chapter 5). For Brodie (2007:103) however, a neoliberal approach suggests:

One which, following from economic doxa, brackets out the influence of structure and systematic barriers to citizen equality and social justice, revolving, instead, around the primacy of individual choices and open systems that empower people to make their own choices about how they will live their own lives.

In their reaction to the extract, Akoojee and McGrath (2003:7) argue that the state sacrificed the tenets of the welfarist Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in action rather than in rhetoric, to an 'efficiency' discourse (economically focused strategy). I refer here to the government's social focus on equity and redress, which was replaced by an economic focus that was designed to respond to a faltering growth, rising inflation and unemployment situation (Akoojee & McGrath, 2003). However, Rawls' (1971) first principle advocates individuals' rights to exercise their calling, which Freeman (1999:230) suggests social institutions should willingly comply with to be recognised as 'just', if they promote the practice of constitutional rights in their operations. This thinking links to Pendlebury and Enslin's (2004) claim that the state is constitutionally required to take reasonable measures to make further education progressively available and accessible to all. In this regard, the policy framework for education reflects a substantial commitment to social justice both in and through education.

In summary, it seems that the concept of social justice, according to Jackson (2005), can be distinguished by two main criteria. First, justice is conceptualised as a virtue that applies to a society and not simply to individual behaviour. Second, social justice also has substantive political content because it recommends the alleviation of poverty and the diminution of inequality (or at least certain dimensions of it) through the distribution of social goods as a matter of justice, rather than charity (Jackson, 2005). In the following sections I will orientate the reader to what is meant by the various notions of social justice practices of equality, equity, quality and redress in the public domain, before looking specifically at how these notions play out in the South African TVET college sector.

4.2.1. Equality

Young (1990) holds that equality primarily refers to the full participation and inclusion of everyone in a society's major institutions, for example, at TVET colleges, and the socially supported substantive opportunity for all to develop and exercise their capacities and realise

their choices. Johns *et al.* (1983:181) support this view and assert that ‘equality of opportunity for all does not mean that every student should have the same programme of education’. It means that every person should have the opportunity for the kind and quality of education that will best meet his [her] needs as an individual and as a member of the society in which he [she] lives.

There should therefore be no controversy about implementing a concept such as this in a democracy, which I believe ought to interest a young democracy like South Africa that had to surmount huge obstacles on its path to become a democracy. Lawton (1977:7) therefore holds that one of the problems of using terms like ‘equality’ and ‘equality of opportunity’ is that they may be interpreted as meaning that everyone should have exactly the same education. Lawton (1977) regards this viewpoint as absurd, since ‘equality’ without any qualification of what is being referred to is nonsense because human beings’ socio-economic positions may differ. For example, some men are taller than others, but others are more intelligent. These examples show that justice does not always require simple equality.

In deliberating on these viewpoints, one can perhaps understand Brighouse’s (2003) claim that there is a great deal of public complaint about educational inequality, but much less clarity about what is actually meant by it. From the perspective of public policy, it makes sense to be concerned with inequality between groups (whites, blacks, Asians, and so forth) because group membership often correlates with disadvantage in the real world. Since we know about the role that race played in our history and our present, inequalities between racial groups give us reason to suspect structural injustices between individuals (Brighouse, 2003:471). On this issue, Barry (2005:5) holds that ‘in contrast to liberalism’s promise of dignity, autonomy, and rights, the economic inequalities generated by unregulated market forces were deemed as being unjust, [probably] the product of structural flaws that modern “just” societies like [modern] South Africa could ameliorate through redistribution’.

Lawton (1977), however, holds that even the straight-forward solution of treating everyone equally is difficult to apply in education. Indeed, Lawton’s ideas (1977:8) relate to ‘Aristotle’s supposition that injustice may result from treating unequal individuals equally, as well as from treating equal individuals unequally’. An example from an education context could be a blind child having the same education as a sighted child or an intellectually challenged child having the same education as a gifted child. It therefore seems that the policy of positive discrimination has, to a large extent, resolved these types of problems where policies that are in alignment with Rawls’ (1971) difference principle are appropriate in these situations. However, in situations where the interest of the individual is compared to that of the entire student body at, say, TVET colleges, the right of the collective takes preference. Wessels (2005) however, contends the specific purposes or ends of affirmative action seem to be breaking down barriers to equal employment opportunity for women and minorities, ending

their oppression, and addressing, redressing and rectifying previous and existing discriminatory practices.

Rawls (1971), however, holds that all members in a society have the same basic rights of liberty, and thus resources should be distributed to provide the greatest benefit to the least advantaged. These are indeed the two key observations in this study, because without sufficient available public funds, and/or the fairness of its distribution, social justice (for example, equity) programmes cannot either be established or be sustained to benefit the deserving, needy students. Of particular interest to this study, however, is Rawls' (1971) reasoning for justice, not because it is good or right, but because there is an increasing number of people questioning the notions of who is to be advantaged and/or disadvantaged. Given this perception, I will argue that our concern for equality and social justice in a democratic society such as ours is a key understanding from which our concern for equity will flow.

4.2.2. Equity

In having introduced the poor and troubled past of South African education provision in section 4.1, I shall now draw on Akoojee's (2002:1) argument that 'there is an undeniable national need in South African institutions to enable the participation and success of students previously disadvantaged by the apartheid system' at, say, TVET colleges. He therefore notes that one can probably argue that equity and redress are important imperatives for a society attempting to transform to a democratic order. Hence, Norman-Major's (2011) claim that the conception of justice supports the definition of social equity as being a policy and the distribution of resources provide equality of opportunity. In this regard, I wish to draw attention to Rawls' (1971) first principle which is underscored by a notion of equality, and the second principle, namely the difference principle, which is underscored by a notion of equity or fairness.

Andrews and Van der Walle (2012:9) hold, on the one hand, that equity refers to how well public organisations tailor service provision to meet the needs of the diverse groups of citizens they serve, whereas Norman-Major (2011:237) holds that 'while economy, efficiency and effectiveness deal with how government operates, equity delves into questions of for whom government operates'. Frederickson (2010) holds that the debate is concerned with the following questions: for whom is the organisation well managed? Or for whom is the organisation efficient? And for whom are public services more or less fairly delivered? In response, Frederickson (2010), on the other hand, argues that, unlike the relatively objective nature of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, the terms fair, just, equitable and equity are highly normative and make it more difficult to reach agreement on and how they are incorporated in practice. Norman-Major (2011:239), however, holds that 'each person is

being guaranteed the same basic rights' in society in receiving the resources and support necessary to provide 'the same opportunity to participate in the public sector'.

Reimer (2005:2) therefore notes that the Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines the term equity as 'freedom from bias or favouritism.' For example, it is illogical to seek the same outcomes for all. If that is so, what does equity in outcomes mean? Attaining a certain basket of academic, social or career skills? Whatever the case may be, Reimer (2005:4) admits that one wonders if equity of outcomes can be a realistic, achievable goal. Indeed, a perception such as this will support the view that equity is a concept that flows from our concern for key notions such as equality and social justice in a democratic society. However, Arnaud (2001:4733) holds that 'a concern for equity is not tantamount to an insistence on equality'. Therefore, notes Herrera (2007), equity actually calls for deliberate efforts to reduce gross inequalities, that is, first, to deal with factors that cause or perpetuate them, and second, to promote a fairer sharing of resources.

In doing that, I argue, sufficient funds will be required that will not only remove an inequality, but will sustain this action over a lengthy period, that is, if the prevailing austerity financial regime, which addresses operational wastage issues, will allow it. This is clearly reflected in the extract hereafter where Lawton, cited by Reimer (2005:1), argues that:

Equity, efficiency, autonomy and adequacy are the four values that tend to underlie debate about education finance. Equity remains the paramount issue that attracts public notice and support. The underdog, it seems, has a special position in our hearts, and it seems unfair for one child, because of chance, to have access to a better public education than another (Reimer, 2005:1).

With regard to what the extract is supposed to reflect, Samoff's (2001) explanation is helpful. That is, equity has to do with fairness and justice, which Samoff views as a problematic relationship. In this regard, 'the point is not to keep the advantaged group out, but rather to help the disadvantaged group to join in' (Samoff, 2001:18). Wessels (2005), however, elaborates on the concept by contextualising it in a specific policy. For example, the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (RSA, 1997a) defines equity as a value from the constitution. In this regard, Wessels (2005:129) defines equity as follows: 'where there has been unfairness, corrective measures must be implemented so as to ensure that human resource practices are free from discrimination, invisible barriers and unjustness, which will impede equal employment opportunities'.

Such a line of reasoning supports Dowling's (1999) opinion as cited in Akoojee (2002:1) that 'a policy of equity and redress requires resolute intervention in the different levels of working and social life of this country to rectify the consequences of past discrimination'. Akoojee (2002) therefore suggests that a policy is required to enable people who were historically

disadvantaged to compete on a par with their more privileged colleagues, which is a viewpoint that I share. In this regard, the concept equity refers to corrective measures as a tool for enhancing equal employment opportunities. Indeed, to the extreme, this may even be interpreted to mean that ‘every child within a state’s borders should have equal access to educational facilities, programmes and services’ (McGrath, 1993:2).

Lewis and Motala (2004:122) support this viewpoint. They argue that ‘equity reforms in post-apartheid South Africa in the late 1990s were intended to equalise funding among provinces, schools and socio-economic groups’. It is from this point of view, that I explore educational practice at TVET colleges. The argument in the Gazette (RSA, 2008:32) that ‘one factor inhibiting access to vocational education and training in South Africa is the financial position of the majority of the identified potential student population’ is significant.

In fact, this perception led to the introduction of the TVET college bursary scheme, that is, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), to ensure that an inability to pay college fees does not constitute a barrier to academically capable students (RSA, 2008:32). In other words, this scheme assists quality students who are academically more than capable to continue and complete their studies successfully.

4.2.3. Quality in public education

Arcaro (1995) holds that quality means ensuring that every individual has the building blocks to complete a job properly. In this regard, he argues that quality is a structured process for improving the output produced, with quality being the most important component of business, education and government. Furthermore, he suggests that old norms and beliefs must be challenged, and that we must learn to promote quality despite having to work with fewer resources. However, in providing workers (students) with proper tools and training, they will produce products and services that meet customer expectations consistently.

One may therefore argue that justice does not solely involve equal access to a state-delivered service, because it also involves the state providing a quality service. This perception links to Arcaro’s (1995) argument that society demands improvement in the quality of education. In this regard, the Draft Education White Paper 3 (RSA, 1997a:12) posits that ‘applying the principle of quality entails evaluating services and products against set standards, with a view to improvement, renewal or progress’. However, what these ‘set standards’ exactly are, is an issue of contestation. In this regard, the Government Gazette (RSA, 1997a:13) draws attention to the ‘sense of specific expectations and requirements that should be complied with and in the sense of ideals of excellence’ that should be aimed at.

Therefore, one would spell out in specific detail what these specific expectations and requirements are, as well as what exactly the ‘ideals of excellence’ entail (RSA, 1997a:13).

Bloch (2009), on the one hand, spells out some of these expectations by arguing that there is reliable evidence that the benefits of services like education to individuals and society are enhanced when quality is high. In this regard, clearly defined and articulated learning outcomes represented by learners' achievement test scores are beneficial to individuals and society in general. Hence, Bloch's (2009) claim that good results are closely related to higher earnings in the labour market. In fact, differences in quality are likely to indicate differences in individual worker productivity, which therefore supports results from empirical research that demonstrate quality teaching and learning improve national economic potential, as well as the quality of the labour force (Bloch, 2009).

Even though quality is presently the most important aspect in education, business and society continue to fail in its support of improvement efforts, argues Arcaro (1995). Indeed, as global challenges accelerate and proliferate, meeting quality requirements depends on how well individual nations engage in trade, knowledge, and skill formation. In this regard, Galabawa and Alphonse (2005:2) suggest that three conditions are necessary, though not sufficient, for competition. These are inter alia:

- (i) That each nation will be better prepared through educational transformation to meet the future economic, political and social challenges than previous generations were;
- (ii) That each nation will provide the highest-quality education at the lowest possible cost per student.
- (iii) That each nation realises that provision of poor quality education at high and wasted cost seriously compromises economic and personal futures.

These conditions have relevance with regard to Ramphela (2009:1) questioning, in the Sunday Times of 18 January, 'which country in the 21st century can afford to have more than a third of its high school graduate class failing?'. In this regard, I shall draw on Dewey's (1923:65) claim that 'if education is growth, it must progressively realise present possibilities, and thus make individuals better fitted to cope with latter requirements'. In such a situation, our TVET college system should become the vehicle to redress the historical impediments of apartheid, that is, poorly resourced and managed education that may have prevented our students in the past from being steered, equipped and motivated to seek excellence in their academic performances. However, in having said that, I realise that the availability of sufficient funds is and remains the key factor to sustain corrective redress programmes.

4.2.4. Redress

Similar to the concept 'quality', is that of 'redress' that is often used in a broad sense. Indeed, Barnes (2005) holds that 'redress' became a blanket code word for important issues, but that it had different implications at different times for different people in South Africa, whereas the notion of 'redress', according to Barnes (2005:216), entails equality and equity. Redress

should be driven first and foremost by equity so that there can be meaningful equality. Barnes (2005:210) therefore holds that the meanings of 'redress range from rectifying a wrong to reparation to restoring equality to empowerment'. In the following paragraphs, I shall discuss selected interpretations of 'redress' to explain and understand its meaning.

With regard to redress as reparation, Barnes (2005) refers to a time in the early 1990s when change occurred unevenly in higher education as apartheid era restrictions were relaxed and detention of staff and students came to an abrupt end. It seemed as if the burden of oppression suddenly became lighter and that, at the same time, inequality would disappear. This situation may have been created by the advent of democratic rule in South Africa. However, the government was obliged to redress inequalities of the past and repeal discriminatory policies and practices that were created by the apartheid regime (Rembe, 2005). However, matters of equity and redress are often allegedly in tension with economic constraints. This thinking means that redress programmes are most probably dependent specifically on the availability of financial resources.

Therefore, despite its diverse challenges and financial constraints, the post-apartheid government of South Africa was committed to achieving fundamental transformation of the public governance system. However, according to the OECD (2008a:3) publication, these reforms were a priority in South Africa and would most probably have played a key role in redressing the injustices of apartheid. For example, the Government Gazette of August (RSA, 1997a:11) elaborates that 'by applying the principle of equity [,] it implies on the one hand, a critical identification of existing inequalities and on the other, a programme of transformation with a view to redress'.

I shall therefore regard the decision that was taken by government to commit to achieving transformation as a rational and necessary one, because it served the purpose of focusing the strategic interest of South Africa (inclusive education) within its means of realisation. However, in a speech by the then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki (1998) at the University of Durban-Westville, the tension between the overall need for redress and the actual resources available to do so, was confirmed:

We are caught in the horns of a cruel dilemma. On the one hand there is the pressing need, on the other hand, the fact of the matter is that there is absolutely no social need in our country, which is not both massive and pressing (Barnes, 2005:216).

Flowing from his speech is an acknowledgement by Mbeki that GEAR, the macro-economic policy adopted in 1996, proposed that South Africa's enormous social welfare needs would be met successfully in the future if existing debts were paid and social programmes were not funded from new borrowing. In this regard, Akoojee, Gewer and McGrath (2005) hold that McCord (2003) argued that GEAR used a typical adjustment approach in an attempt to

contain spending and inflation while at the same time refocusing the budget to redress the spending inequities of the apartheid era. This development identifies the neoliberal-oriented thought that underpinned policy initiatives at the time, that large amounts of new monies (as reparation) were simply not sustainable, or should I rather say available, in the inherited economic environment (Jansen 2002b).

This perception could therefore justify the claim that RDP could not be sustained, since it was quickly infused. However, the ANC-led government has had little political and economic room to manoeuvre in putting policies into practice in the years following the elections. This situation probably led to GEAR replacing the RDP strategy and set about a different efficiency-focused approach to education, resulting in a protracted education discourse. Indeed, these two basic policy choices were first, the trade-off between economic efficiency and social equity and second, long- and short-term benefits. The government, however, has resisted the calls of populism and has stressed efficiency and long-term considerations in most areas of economic policy, such as deregulation, that underlie the GEAR.

Nevertheless, unresolved issues resonate with Brighouse's (2003) claim that there is a great deal of public complaint about educational inequality, and Miller's (1999) emphasis that justice does not always require equal distribution. I will now explore how South African students actually experience social justice as it is practised at higher educational institutions, in particular at TVET colleges.

4.3. Social justice discourse in South African education

In this section, I draw attention to the role that market-oriented policies have allegedly played in promoting social justice practices in education delivery, whilst pursuing efficiency practices in South Africa. In this regard, the White Paper (RSA, 2013) for post-school education and training holds that, since the advent of a democratic government in 1994, South Africa had been building a new education and training system whose goal has been to meet the needs of a democratic society. This was to be achieved by means of policy developments directed at: first, democratising the education system by overcoming unfair discrimination; second, expanding access to education and training opportunities; and third, improving the quality of education, training and research, especially at TVET colleges.

This line of thinking links to Pendlebury and Enslin (2004:31) questioning 'how successful has South Africa been in overcoming injustice in education and the larger social injustices that result from it?' This is indeed a pertinent question, because without people taking action, there is no hope of getting fairness into educational practice, argues Griffiths (2003). Bloch (2009:30) however, reminds us that 'we can only shake off the negative influences of the past once we become aware of how they shaped us'. However, the lack of post-school (education & training) opportunities has resulted in, according to Sheppard and Ntenga

(2013), approximately three million youths between the ages of 18 and 24 years not in employment, education or training (NEET). This reality links to Bloch's (2009: 55) note that 'we should not be surprised that strands and strains from the past persist and reproduce and mutate as "legacy effects"'.

Having said that, Akoojee (2002:2) reminds us that the transformation of South African society, struggling to undo the ravages of its past, needs to be provided with suitable opportunities to realise its potential. However, without clear and immediate results, argues Norman-Major (2011), it is difficult to build support for programmes that are designed to reduce inequity and argue that they are economical, effective, or efficient. In this regard the strategies that are developed have to balance, on the one hand, the institutional (TVET college) need for autonomy and, on the other hand, adhere to the national need for efficiency, equality, equity and redress, without compromising any of them.

4.3.1. Equality in education

Walker (2012:384) holds that 'we live in a world of considerable inequality and this affects all of us directly or indirectly'. Riddell (1998) holds that equality of outcome, for example, compensates for inherited disadvantages, and may imply that, if social inequalities are to be challenged rather than reproduced, then the system must be regarded as fundamentally flawed and in need of radical change. This statement, I argue, has relevance in Bloch's (2009:59) example, which argues that vast inequalities are produced and reproduced in schools, where at most 20% (of the population) produces the great majority of graduates and success stories in the system. The significance of this statistic is that this inequality cannot be sustained in a 'democratic' South Africa, where all citizens have a democratic voice (Bloch, 2009:59).

This thinking relates to Johns *et al.*'s (1983:184) statement that 'the desirability of equality of educational opportunity has never been accepted in theory in certain parts [for example, apartheid South Africa] of the world. It seems impossible to attain adequacy under present [democratic] conditions in many underdeveloped areas'. In this regard, I refer to FW de Klerk's (2011:13) statement that South Africa has had a long history of inequality. This viewpoint is particularly relevant to education, especially Chisholm's (1997) claim, as I argued in section 1.1, that apartheid bequeathed an enormous legacy of educational inequality. And yet, Miller (2003) holds that 'inequalities in society are at times just' (Robinson, 2016:13). I am referring here to those individuals who are more meritorious because of their performances deserve more than those who are less meritorious because of their education, skill and performances (Miller, 2003).

Indeed, this is an important observation, because it identifies an ideological (apartheid) approach, which may lead to a perception of just or unjust practices and its consequences.

One may, nevertheless, expect that the unjust situations be addressed by seeking redress via the establishment of equality through state-sponsored programmes. Such actions will probably mean state intervention and regulations. However, by not intervening, the state may actually be accused of inadvertently perpetuating inequalities in education or showing reluctance in addressing them since the tension between equity, equality and resources is allegedly evident in education. This is reflected in Barry's (2005) claim that once children/students are in school (college), the odds are high that the advantages in the environment to which they have been exposed, will continue to exist.

For example, an advantaged student will continue to have access to advantages with which equal education will not be able to contend. Similarly, how well a student is nourished, for example, is inextricably connected to benefits gained from school (college) attendance (Barry, 2005). Fortunately, this situation has probably changed in recent years because of food schemes at schools and the availability of financial aid at colleges. In this regard, Badat (1997), on the one hand, suggests that equality of education is key to achieving equality in the social order. On the other hand, in debates about equality, it is frequently assumed that government has decreed that changes in the education system be made, including the equalising of access. This action allegedly would transform the economy and produce systematic levelling effects on class, race, gender and other forms of inequalities.

Hence, De Klerk's (2011) note that in some respect, government policy may even have aggravated inequality. For example, unbalanced affirmative action has had a detrimental effect on the delivery of services to the broader public. Such action would probably point to a tension existing between policies that are aimed at promoting individual benefits and policies aimed at promoting the social good, often at the expense of an individual's advantages. I therefore argue that social justice demands that the tenets enshrined in South Africa's Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), be adhered to for all students. In this regard, Lupton (2005) holds that social justice in education demands, at the very minimum, that all students should have access to schools/colleges of the same quality. Moreover, Akoojee and McGrath (2004) hold that the RDP strategy was premised on the understanding that equity and redress had to be achieved quickly, I however, differ, as the achievement of equity and redress depend on the availability of public funds.

4.3.2. Equity in education

Hall (2009:48) notes that Gordon (1999) differentiates between equality and equity in the following way: 'Equality requires sameness, but equity requires that treatments be appropriate and sufficient to those characteristics and needs of those treated. For educational equity to be served, treatment must be specific to one's functional characteristics

and sufficient to the realities of one's condition'. This goal is in line with the Freedom Charter's (1955) declaration that the doors of learning and culture shall be opened.

However, the principle of equity requires fair opportunities both to enter higher education programmes and to succeed in them. This implies, on the one hand, a critical identification of existing inequalities which are the product of policies, structures and practices based on racial, gender, disability and other forms of discrimination, and on the other hand, a programme of transformation with a view to redress. Indeed, as I argued in section 2.2, the aim will be to expose the political nature of education policies and their unjust power consequences. In this regard, transformation involves, on the one hand, not only the abolition of all existing forms of unjust differentiation, but also serves as a measure of empowerment, including financial support to bring about equal opportunity for individuals (Badat & Sayed, 2014).

In having said that, Akoojee (2002) reminds us that Badat (1997) claimed, on the one hand, the intractable tension between the concerns for development and equity, and on the other hand, the need to ensure social redress. However, there cannot be any real development without equity and social redress (Akoojee, 2002). This clearly shows that these notions relate to, or are influenced by, or are intertwined with one another. In this regard, Moja (2005) argues that the Council on Higher Education Report (2000) lists effectiveness and efficiency challenges before mentioning equity, even though both the White Paper (RSA, 1997a) and the National Commission on Higher Education Report (NCHE, 1996) started with equity as the first transformation principle. It therefore seems that 'instead of equity versus development being the main tension in the post-apartheid era, it could be argued that a tension is emerging between equity and efficiency' (Moja, 2005:6).

These shifts in policy documents can possibly be read as an indication of the slide towards efficiency after the formulation of the GEAR macroeconomic policy in 1996. In this way, Lewis and Motala (2004:122) hold that 'the government's expression of equity has come to be framed in ways consistent with neoliberal theories, among others, universal access, which may be restricted through user fees, decentralisation and prominent market features' whereas the OECD's Policy Briefs (2008a) holds that equity in education has two dimensions. The first dimension is fairness, which essentially means making sure that personal and social circumstances, for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin, should not pose an obstacle to achieving educational potential. The second is inclusion, in other words ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all. An example would be that everyone should be able to read, write, and master basic arithmetic.

However, would it be wrong to respond to policy failure by advocating that the state should not be directing education policy in the first place? That is, in view of Lerner's (2000) note

that neoliberal economic theory advocates a minimalist state intervention in social programmes. This approach means the state ought to refrain from financing certain social programmes in education that are directed at redressing past injustices (Khosa, 2001). For a state like South Africa, with its record of past apartheid-inspired social deprivations, the contra-argument of increased state involvement will be a more rational choice. I will therefore argue, in summary, that state-driven policies aimed at equity have not really delivered educational good, whereas neoliberal policies may have resulted in many educational programmes for the poor not being implemented at all. This suggests, according to Akoojee (2002), that the need to ensure quality, at least in principle, is linked closely to equity and development.

4.3.3. Quality of education

Akoojee (2002), on the one hand, holds that the White Paper on Education (RSA, 1997a) makes the link between access and quality in a way that suggests that striving for quality is intrinsic to the concern of equity, whereas Badat and Sayed (2014), on the other hand, argue that good quality public education is critical for social justice in and through education. This, as Badat and Sayed (2014) argue, is so that it is a necessary condition for the formation of the intellectual and other capabilities of individuals such as their cultivation as lifelong learners, their functioning as economically and socially productive people, and their participation as critical and democratic citizens. In this regard, Badat (2009) holds that there is an undeniable and powerful link between the socially disadvantaged, equity of access, opportunity, and outcomes and achievement in education, particularly at TVET colleges.

Table 4. 1: Lecturer Qualifications at TVET colleges

HIGHEST (ACADEMIC) QUALIFICATION	PERCENTAGE
N6	1.9
Undergraduate Diploma	37.7
Degree	27.1
Post-Graduate/Diploma	30.6
Masters	2.4
PhD	0.3

Source: TNA Report (Mgijima & Morobe, 2012:37) in ETDP SETA (2012: 27) sector skills plan update.

However, for South Africans to achieve this objective, it would require that the teaching skills levels of its educators (instructors), with respect to the presentation and management of their subjects, need to be substantially improved. For example, in a study by Mgijima and Morobe

(ETDP SETA, 2012), the 1.9% depicted in Table 4.1 indicates some educators having only N6 (NATED programmes) as their highest qualifications, whereas the percentage of lecturers teaching the National Certificate (Vocational) [NC(V)] programme without a teaching qualification was 37.7%, implying that 62.3% may be assumed to have a teaching qualification (ETDP SETA, 2012:26).

In fact, the percentage may also include lecturers who only studied short courses such as assessor, moderator and so forth, and thereby acquired some credits. The same study also found that most lecturers have an undergraduate diploma, a degree and postgraduate degree/diploma (2012:26) - as shown above in Table 4.1. And yet, on the one hand, there are no predetermined qualifications that are offered by training providers to train TVET college lecturers (ETDP SETA, 2012). On the other hand, numerous interventions happened to support lecturer development, despite the absence of a coherent continuing professional development (CPD) strategy. Indeed, little impact has been made, that is, of a wider process for developing simultaneously the professional expertise of individual teachers and the profile of the vocational sector as a whole (ETDP SETA, 2012).

Clearly, apartheid education led to vast disparities in quality and outcome, and, may I add, that poor or inappropriate qualifications of educators may even have contributed to this sorry situation. For example, Bloch (2009:25) holds that 'education as it stands today continues to reproduce inequalities in society, [that is] inequalities that could threaten the stability and comforts of all young people'. In this situation, on the one hand, education reflects our inherited past and is therefore part of the problems of our current society. In this regard, 'vast inequalities are [allegedly] produced and reproduced in schools, so that a small band of at most 20% produces the majority of graduates and success stories in the system' (Bloch, 2009:59). On the other hand, such statistics confirm Ramphela's (2009) claim that our education system (OBE) was engineering the perpetuation of inequalities with the result that the majority of poor black students are left behind.

Bloch (2009:18), therefore, suggests that there is sufficient evidence that the benefits of education to individuals and society are enhanced when quality is high. However, by following the timelines of specific responses made in the public media, I conclude that this education discourse is indeed a protracted one that needs to be addressed. Indeed, this viewpoint is clearly articulated by protracted authoritative statements that Parkes, Gore and Amosa (2010) hold are statements that not only inscribe particular relations of power, but are so seductive that it is often difficult, sometimes impossible or even dangerous, to think otherwise.

Schwartzman (2013) however, notes that Ginsberg (2011) holds that few incoming college students have been prepared for exercising critical discernment as consumers (of

education). To exacerbate such an educational situation, the ETDP SETA's (2012) publication argues that TVET colleges recruit lecturers from their best students who have attained the N6 qualification. However, these students lack the critical work experiences to serve as a mentor and role model for their students. Although these college graduates actually serve as lecturers, they can seek admission into universities for further training, and then, on qualifying they can be recruited back into the colleges as lecturers, still lacking critical technical teaching experience. However, those with experience from the industry sector also get recruited to teach in the TVET colleges, even if they do not have teaching qualifications.

In fact, due to a scarcity of qualified personnel in some fields, retired professionals are also recruited as lecturers into the colleges. However, one can regard lecturing staff that are recruited via the latter two methods (that of using experienced industry workers and retired professionals) as being better prepared from a technical and work-related point of view. However, they are still lacking in the crucial pedagogical requirements. Hence, Gewer's (2010:15) response in this regard is that '[i]deally, college lecturers require a balance of technical and pedagogical qualifications as well as industry experience'. Nevertheless, I hold that these lecturers would still be in a better position to guide students with regard to the workplace demands, because of their technical know-how and greater understanding of the challenges that await graduates on entering the unfamiliar world of work.

However, with the introduction of the NC(V) programme, TVET colleges employed educators from the schooling sector, argues the ETDP SETA report (2012: 26), who came with no additional training that prepared them for their lecturing responsibilities, unlike the school situation. A more appropriate source is the growing number of lecturers from other countries that are joining the TVET colleges, since most of them are equipped with scarce skills to teach subjects like Mathematics, Physical Science, Information Technology (IT), and so forth (ETDP SETA, 2012). Nevertheless, a probable solution to this skilled-lecturer problem concerns the use of a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) strategy, because the CPD embraces the idea that individuals aim for continuous improvement in their professional skills and knowledge beyond the basic training initially required to carry out the job (ETDP SETA, 2012).

In conclusion, I refer to Arcaro (1995) who points out that quality requires a commitment to excellence, a dedication to leadership and a willingness to change. Nevertheless, one often encounters people (government or educational) who talk about the quality philosophy, but who do not implement quality principles. In this regard, Mayer *et al.*'s (2011) claim, that the dysfunctionality of the education system, in addition to its lack of alignment with the skills and capabilities needs of South Africa's labour market, may actually be the fundamental reason why our youth exit the system without being employable. For example, Spaull (2015:2) notes

that 'it is highly problematic that around 60% of South African youth end up with no national or widely recognised educational qualification, despite spending a relatively high number of years in education'.

Such outcomes, I argue, should be associated with an education system being ineffective as well as being inefficient. In fact, this trend may be explained by Akoojee and Nkomo's (2007) reference to the dichotomy between the imperatives of redress and efficiency as it plays out in the higher education sector. This viewpoint is explained by Nkomo, Akoojee and Motlhanke's (2007) claim that for higher education institutions, the need to achieve redress of past injustices has to be undertaken in a context of institutional efficiency, which will be discussed in the following section.

4.3.4. Redress through education

Meaningful redress must go hand in hand with the improvement of the quality of education delivery. Practical evidence in the workplace suggests that the benefits of education to individuals and society are enhanced when quality is high (Bloch, 2009). On this issue, Bloch (2009:30) notes that 'while we are never victims of the past, we cannot simply shrug off the way the society we inherited has influenced the institutions and the culture of the present'. For example, the rationale for the National Party's policies, as reflected by the thoughts of a former member of parliament (MP), JN Le Roux (1945), still echo in the inherited poor quality of erstwhile black schools.

(Schools) should not give natives an academic education, as some people are prone to do. If we do this, we shall later be burdened with a number of academically trained Europeans and non-Europeans, and who is going to do the manual labour in this country? (Bloch, 2009:43).

The extract above demonstrates clearly the thinking that led to some of our most pressing problems in education, with which the nation now grapples. Clearly, South Africa will need to continue searching for suitable recourse to redress the harm that was perpetrated through policies that were motivated by such thinking. Such thinking links to Griffiths' (2003:12) question: 'How can education best benefit all individuals and, at the same time, the society they live in?' It challenges authorities to pursue what their vision suggests in an educational context. For example, in terms of educational policy-making, how can we promote the advantages of education so that the good of all does not depend on the ill of some? In this regard, Griffiths (2003) argues that a just society has to resolve the possible tension between the benefits for individuals and their society to the satisfaction of both.

Perhaps the solution lies in achieving the goal that is mentioned by the Human Resource Development strategy for South Africa (HRD-SA, 2010–2030) in an article as approved on 18 March 2009:

The Government's economic policies require human resource development on a massive scale. Improved training and education are fundamental to higher employment, the introduction of more advanced technologies, and reduced inequalities. Higher labour productivity will be the result of new attitudes towards work and especially new skills in the context of overall economic reconstruction and development. New and better management skills are urgently required (HRD-SA, 2009).

The extract clearly reflects ambitious goals, the feasibility of which should be judged according to Pendlebury and Enslin's (2004) earlier cautioning that social injustice persists despite an impressive suite of policies for a more just education system. Indeed, as stated in Chapter 3, political leaders claim that better education has become the prescription for creating individual success, social harmony and international competitiveness. In this regard, Norris (2001) holds that redressing historical imbalances relating to both staff appointments and student access is an imperative for South African higher education institutions (including TVET colleges) as it has become declared policy of the South African government to make access to a quality education a reality for all its citizens. It is for this reason, I argue, that the White Paper 3 of 1997 for education had already called on higher education to contribute to South Africa achieving political economic reconstruction and development, as well as the redistributive social policies that are aimed at equity.

In summary, Brighouse (2003) claims that people's life prospects are profoundly affected by the character of the institutions in which they are raised and in which they interact. Indeed, schools govern the distribution of the benefits and burdens of social interaction. It is therefore necessary to ensure, on the one hand, that these institutions are governed by policies aimed at equity, equality and quality in accordance with the desired principles of social justice. On the other hand, one should consider the consequences of the government reprioritising its spending at the expense of educational redress programmes.

Such action will augur ill for the education prospects of the under-privileged, especially when measured against the reality that the apartheid regime did not pay much attention to fostering the cause of social justice in education. In fact, it did just the opposite by denying under-privileged students their constitutional right to equal education. Therefore, in fairness to the efforts of the state and the interest of the individual (student), I argue that one should encourage students, where possible, to create their own reward through diligent, innovative and creative work, instead of relying solely on government handouts to improve their social positions or economic status. In having said that, it is essential, argue Nkomo *et al.* (2007), that educational access be transformed, that new institutions be created, and that a system of widespread quality be introduced.

4.3.5. Educational access

Education, according to Samoff (2001), has been at the centre of the anti-apartheid struggle, its task being, everyone agreed, social transformation. Therefore, when the ANC assumed power, its key concerns were expanded access, desegregation and the redress of inequality. In fact, this process was further facilitated, as I argued earlier in section 4.2.2, when the NSFAS was established to provide financial assistance to the academically deserving, needy students. However, currently there is a concern that the NSFAS can no longer afford to support a continuously growing number of students flocking into higher education institutions. I am of course referring here to the #feesmustfall campaign of students at universities.

In order to be a recipient of education, one needs to access it; in other words, one needs to exercise one's democratic right to an education as it is enshrined in the South African Constitution in accordance with Act 108 of 1996, Section 29(1). This right was violated during the apartheid era. Oppression during that time resulted in what Pendlebury and Enslin (2004) describe as peoples' exclusion from participating in the deliberation of education that affects their own lives and the possibilities for their self-development. This view places Samoff's (2001) claim in perspective by suggesting that for education to transform society, its first task had to be to expand access and to do so massively and rapidly. Such a view is relevant to South Africa, considering the immeasurable deprivation or exclusion of access to education that was suffered by disadvantaged communities.

In addressing this access situation, the ANC government made good on their promise in their Freedom Charter, according to Christie (2003:1), that 'the doors of culture and learning shall be open to all'. As is the case elsewhere in Africa, when a new government assumed power, its primary concerns were expanded access, desegregation and redress (Samoff, 2001). The apparent drawback, however, indicates that the consequences may include a decrease in education quality, college efficiency, and of educator and student satisfaction. In this regard, the HRDC's (Rasool & Mahembe, 2014:31) document holds that 'there is a tendency to perceive access to education purely in terms of admission to institutions. This is a narrow view of access. In a broader sense, access refers to entry to different institutional types and programmes, good facilities, employability, (student) support services, quality teaching and learning, and so forth' (Nkomo & Akoojee, 2007).

In recent times, however, the non-availability of sufficient student financial support has boiled over into the public domain in the form of, sometimes, violent student "no fees" protests chiefly at universities, except for the few stirrings at the odd TVET college. It would most definitely influence students' progress, in view of Snodgrass (2016:2), who notes that 'it [#fees must fall movement] demands deep transformation in all sectors of the higher education landscape and, in essence, encompasses broader societal issues of social justice

and equality'. Indeed, its progress would be affected, I suspect, if the state cannot provide a lasting solution to a financially-related social problem. In this regard, Crouch and Patel (2008) argue that educationally, even before 1994, South Africa had already massively expanded educational access. Therefore, in respect of access, the Government Gazette (1997a) provides clear direction to the government's position as:

Ensuring equity of access must be complemented by a concern for equity of outcomes. Increased access must not lead to a 'revolving door' syndrome for Black students, with high failure and drop-out rates. In this respect, the Ministry is committed to ensuring that public funds earmarked for achieving redress and equity must be linked to measurable progress toward improving quality and reducing the high drop-out and repetition rates (RSA, 1997a :17)

The extract highlights the interrelation between access, equity, redress and quality. It also signals the importance that government attaches to outputs or outcomes, which may result from the implementation of education policies, because it occurs in a highly complex social environment, intersecting with local conditions. Of particular interest to students is the acknowledgement of the requirement for the development and provision of student support services, which would include career guidance, counselling and financial aid (RSA, 1997a). Indeed, the need for these support services is crucial if meaningful access is to be achieved.

In this regard, expanding access to higher education would be meaningless unless it is accompanied by policies, practices and services that actually help often poorly prepared students to be successful in their studies. In this regard, I draw attention to the government's focus on TVET colleges as the vehicle to skill the South African nation's youth (potential students) in programmes that would lead to them to be employable. In this regard, I draw on Dewey's (1923:65) response that 'because the need of preparation for a continually developing life is great, it is imperative that every energy should be bent to making the present experience as rich and significant as possible'.

Spaull (2015:4) nevertheless notes that Allais argues that 'vast numbers of our children enrol for semi-vocational subjects that are not teaching them either robust academic skills by building concepts and knowledge, nor preparing them for work in any meaningful way'. In this regard, both parents and learners need to be advised about the occupational paths available to prospective students. Therefore, occupational paths need to be better constructed and organised and, from a public communication standpoint, more clearly communicated to all local educational stakeholders (Babson, 2014:161). A clearer picture is provided in Figure 4.1, which depicts Gewer's (2010) Coherent Model that shows how TVET colleges can accommodate students at both pre-Grade 12 and post-Grade 12 in the NC(V) qualifications, in so doing realising the dual role of TVET colleges that were expressed in the national plan.

This statement can probably be linked to Allais' (2012:633) claim that vocational education and skills development in South Africa provide a clear example of how education policy can be trapped in a paradigm of 'self-help', employability that works against the possibility of achieving improved levels of education and skills. In this regard, Galabawa and Alphonse (2005) regard efficiency as a label for quality, where quality of education is linked closely to the efficiency in the delivery of state services, which is key to how education is provided.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter explored the discourses of social justice as practised in the TVET college sector, as raised by the main research question and sub question on social justice practices. In this regard, I touched on Rawls' two principles of justice and his theory associated with social justice. After I unpacked each of the notions of social justice, namely equality, equity, redress and quality in education, I established in each case that much still remains to be done. In this regard, I draw on Young's (1990) claim that conditions of structural inequality that still exist in a democratic South Africa, which have widened and deepened democratic practices, will provide our best means of promoting social justice.

However, the prevailing concern in the public domain centers on the issue of the persistent inequality which remains, which is probably exacerbated by the failure of our education system for black South African youth in particular. Therefore, justifying Trevor Manuel's (2011:4) claim that the nation's education system as 'a failing education system'. Manuel's (2011) statement, however, underscores South Africans' growing concern with the lack of (social) efficiency of the education provided, especially at TVET colleges. Norris (2001) therefore holds that student access is an imperative for higher education institutions such as TVET colleges. In the following chapter, I will assess, how successfully social interventions in the form of educational programmes focussing on equality, equity and redress have been conducted at TVET colleges, within the prevailing efficiency regime that is followed there.

Chapter 5

Policy influences at Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges

5.1. Introduction

In the two previous chapters, that is, Chapters 3 and 4, I argued that South African education policies have not actually been succeeding in meeting social justice and efficiency targets in education at TVET colleges, as raised in the main research question. This conclusion does not augur well for South Africa's disadvantaged communities, in general, who still have to suffer deprivation, despite the huge outlays on education and training. Wedekind (2013) claims that the South Africa government has prioritised education and training with three broad social goals: first, to redress past injustices; second, to develop skills for an industrialising economy, and third, enhancing democratic practices.

This chapter will therefore reflect on how educational transformation, in efficiency and social justice practices, is managed, notably via the use of a market-directed education policy at TVET colleges. I shall therefore also have to provide clarity on what is meant by market-directed policies that are used to transform such institutes as TVET colleges to be democratic, efficiently managed TVET colleges. This situation is clearly captured in the White Paper for Education and Training (RSA, 2013:1) in which it is stated that the goal has been to meet the needs of a democratic society:

Policy developments have been aimed at democratising the education system, overcoming unfair discrimination, expanding access to education and training opportunities, and improving the quality of education, training and research. Important policy instruments have been developed including legislation (RSA, 2013:1)

Indeed, the South African government's intention with education is clearly reflected in the extract, since it placed a high premium on education to transform South African society into that of a democracy. The government did however, acknowledge in its Government Gazette (RSA, 2015) that education on its own cannot solve the social problems that face the nation, though it is an important ingredient in the short-term solutions as well as the long-term strategies. This chapter will therefore explore the nature of government's education policy framework, and how it (educational policies) is to transform TVET colleges into efficient education institutions that will also promote social justice. I shall now unpack the issues that influence TVET colleges' operations.

5.2. Policy issues relating to the TVET college sector

Akoojee, Gewer and McGrath (2005:99) have argued that ‘South Africa’s social, economic and political development pathways have been perversely shaped by policies that built divisions within the country and advantaged whites both educationally and economically at the expense of other population groups’. This perception probably led to Palmer and De Klerk’s (2011) claim that since the establishment of the new political dispensation, the South African government has placed emphasis on the introduction of policies and mechanisms aimed at redressing the legacy of a dysfunctional and unequal education system.

Hanushek and Wöfsmann (2007) hold that for educational investments to translate into student learning, all people involved in the education process have to face the right incentives that make them act in ways that would advance student performance. For example, Soares *et al.* (2016) contend that public policymakers, students and their families are pressuring colleges and universities to do more, and to do more for a more diverse population of students. In order to do that, Soares *et al.* (2016) posit that institutions should make (infrastructural) investments that would expand the capacity of their institutional infrastructure. In having said that, Easton (1953:129–130), a political scientist, holds that:

The essence of policy lies in the fact that through it certain things are denied to some people and made accessible to others. A policy, in other words, whether for a society, for a narrow association, or for any other group, consists of a web of decisions that allocate values (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010:7).

This extract shows that a policy expresses patterns of decisions in the context of other decisions taken by political actors on behalf of state institutions from positions of authority (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). At the same time, the extract justifies the generation of a formidable architecture of policies and laws to govern a democratic education in pursuit of ‘ambitious goals and lofty ideals for new programs, schools, colleges, technicons, and universities’ (Jansen & Taylor, 2003:9). In this regard, public policies are to be normative in expressing both ends and means designed to steer the actions and behaviour of people in education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

In fact, the ETDP SETA⁵ (2012) publication remains positive that TVET colleges can still play an important role in economic development and poverty reduction. That is, if due attention is given to properly customising and targeting their programmes to the needs of the labour market, and, may I add, if they are financially feasible and /or sustainable. In this regard,

⁵ The ETDP SETA (2012) is titled a plan, however in its acknowledgement (second page), it is referred to as being a report, which is what I shall refer to it in this document.

Soares *et al.* (2016:5) contend that higher education is under pressure to educate the increasingly diverse and growing population of students in a cost-effective way. It may therefore be considered a risk to foster expectations that are too high, based solely on the power of education as a complex problem which seldom has a single solution. Even though education policies may provide the means (methods) with which to engage in lofty ideals, the execution thereof may actually be economically problematic. I am referring here to Ngcwangu's (2014) claim that although the government's efforts through various policies to encourage artisanal training and vocational education are welcome, he still cautioned that these may prove insufficient.

Nevertheless, the democratic government's response was the prominence that it has given to the skilling strategy (at TVET colleges), that is, in addition to their partiality to (educational) market dictates, argue Rasool and Mahembe (2014). This partiality of government is probably justified, in view of Birnbaum's (1988) claim that educational institutions are, by nature, cumbersome bureaucracies and that they are slow to respond, and are rigid and wasteful. According to the Gazette (RSA, 2015) there is an under-supply of skills to the economy across the board, at the high, intermediate and low skills levels. The Government therefore simply had to generate policies that would expedite the skilling process, but also harness the wastefulness (in resources) that are usually associated with such processes. Indeed, by being an educator, I tend to be rather apprehensive as to whether education in South Africa should actually be the sole vehicle that provides the hope of solving the nation's social, economic and political problems. In this regard, Ngcwangu (2014) notes that Chang (2010) claims that the argument that education alone can solve the challenge of skills and underdevelopment is flawed.

Indeed, this thinking has relevance in view of Carter's (2008) comment that, although access to education in South Africa may have improved - evidence does exist that confirms this when compared to international standards (see Section 3.3.3) - the quality of education is substandard. Indeed, the reality of the challenges that face a democratic South Africa, according to the National Treasury's discussion paper, are reflected as follows:

The persistently high rate of unemployment in South Africa is one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges facing government. Only two in five working age (15 to 64 years) adults in South Africa have jobs and more than 4 million people, which constitutes 24% of the workforce, are currently unemployed (RSA, 2011:9).

The statistics clearly inform us that 'the unemployed do not acquire the skills or experience needed to drive the economy forward, which in turn inhibits the country's economic development and imposes a larger burden on the state to provide social assistance' (RSA, 2011:9). According to Sheppard and Ntenga (2013), one improves a country's competitiveness, its innovation and economic growth by developing human capital. However,

the challenge in technical and vocational education and training at TVET colleges, the recognised driver institutions of the skilling processes, is both a quantitative and qualitative one, argues the Gazette (RSA, 2015). In fact, more education and training must occur in skill areas that are of greater relevance for the labour market.

However, a democratic South Africa does not only have to face the challenges presented by educational inequalities, but also that which involves the transformation of its political and social structures; thus, confirming Jansen and Taylor's (2003) key thought that a major challenge of the new government was to redress the inherited inequalities through social and educational (policy) reforms. This perception is indeed supported by an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2008 b) publication, where it is argued first, that the nation inherited an education system that was plagued by problems. Second, the new government faced the daunting task of building an education system based on different ideological principles, human rights and equality of treatment. These are the two focal areas which this chapter will have to explore with regard to policy action.

For example, in a speech that was presented to the principals of TVET colleges in Cape Town on 17 August 2009, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, shared some of his thoughts on the TVET college sector's mandate for the next five years. Among these were the following:

With respect to the mandate of TVET colleges, you will recall in his State of the Nation address, the President identified TVET colleges as primary sites for skills development over the next five years. In addition, TVET colleges have been identified as the key institutions to broaden post-school education and training opportunities. In this respect, TVET colleges must play a significant role in providing training opportunities for school-leavers, including matriculants, who may not be admitted at our higher education institutions for whatever reasons (Nzimande, 2009).

Based on the points which the minister raised in the extract, Powell (2013:62) is justified in arguing that TVET colleges are 'conceived as critical drivers for responding to the skill needs of the South African economy; they were conceptualised as providing the intermediate to higher-level skills required for "economic growth",' and for the country to 'compete effectively in the global economy'. One may even view colleges as constituted to be part of the broader struggle to resolve the economic, political and social contradictions inherent in the tension between social redress and economic growth, in higher education (Powell, 2013).

This line of thinking links to Sheppard and Ntenga's (2013:241) thinking that the TVET college system is allegedly 'an important investment lever for economic development through its focus on developing skills for the labour market'. Indeed, they argue that TVET (colleges) can extend access to the labour market, therefore increasing labour productivity and improving other labour market outcomes, such as wages and labour employability. In this

regard, TVET can function as a vehicle to bring about improvement(s) to the challenges previously argued. I shall therefore draw on Sheppard and Ntenga's (2013:241) note that an effective TVET college system is 'a critical component of a well-established, good quality, post-school system'. It is therefore crucial for government to know whether its education policies can actually produce first, an efficient college educational system in South Africa that produces desired academic graduate pass rate results, and second, can actually deliver the desired improvements in social justice practices at higher education institutions.

Such a system, I argue, did most definitely not exist in the apartheid era, in particular, for disadvantaged communities. I will rather argue that the converse is also unfortunately true, since the apartheid system was actually very effective in separating racial groups, therefore it actually delivered on what it was designed for. This sinister (policy) plan was, as I have argued elsewhere, first, to deny the huge disadvantaged communities the opportunity to develop their true potential, and second, the legacy of apartheid continues to adversely impact on the development of a vibrant South African democracy from being established. I will now explore what the motivation was of the former apartheid government that led to the establishment of an education system whose implementation caused the creation of high unskilled levels, high unemployment, racial inequalities and poverty that still exists among the disadvantaged communities in South Africa.

5.2.1. Historical overview of pre-1994 technical colleges

In this section, I shall unpack the historical significance of a government's intention to establish policies which determined educational practices that led to poor skill levels, mainly among black South Africans, and therefore compromised their employability. In this regard, I will draw on Dewey's (1921:2) thinking that 'the past is recalled not because of itself, but because of what it adds to the present'. For example, Wedekind (2008) holds that TVET colleges in their current form are a relatively recent development that emerged from the reforms to the education system. However, these colleges are bound to a longer history of more than 100 years of technical and vocational education institutions in South Africa.

Indeed, South Africans are today still influenced by events or decisions made in the distant past, as I argued in the previous section. I refer here specifically to Chisholm's (1992:6) note that 'manual, unskilled work for the mines was seen as the preserve of African people, and schooling or training was not considered particularly important for them'. This line of thinking led to the formulation of educational policies that ensured that the black majority were prevented from realising their potential by the introduction of the Bantu Education Act in 1955. However, its influences still plague the black population's economic and social progress, as I argued in the previous section, with an education system's implementation, via the Bantu Education Act, that led to the creation of high levels of unskilled black citizens who

still experience the high levels of unemployment and consequently the poverty that resulted from it.

Historically, African education allegedly had a strong vocational, but limited technical component, which consisted mainly of trade instructions (Chisholm, 1992), compared to Chisholm's (1992) reference to the creation of free, compulsory schooling for white people, in addition to the development of technical, commercial and industrial education. Hence, at that stage, neither technical, free, nor compulsory education existed for black people (Chisholm, 1992). This unfortunate situation in education for two racially different groups, I suggest, can be argued to have led to the formation and implementation of policies that allegedly contributed to the creation of inequalities in skills development, which is explored in this study. In this regard, Badroodien (2004) notes that:

Technical and vocational education provision before 1910 was regarded as suitable only for non-whites. After 1910 the Union Government reversed this policy emphasis and sought to limit the provision of technical and vocational education to predominantly white recipients (Badroodien, 2004:20)

In view of what is argued in the extract, I hold that education was being used to gain ideological control over an increasingly unruly black population, because black society and its allies refused to blindly accept the imposition of Bantu education. In this regard, Foucault (1979: 60) holds that 'power is never monolithic. It is never completely controlled from one point of view'. This motivation is evident when the National Party came into power in 1948. There was a well-established system of technical colleges for white students, but none for black students (Chisholm, 1992:9). Indeed, technical education at the colleges was more amenable to Afrikaner nationalist interests, whereas technical education was subordinate to Bantustan policy, which directed the system through which the African youth was vocationalised (Chisholm, 1992). This justified De Wet and Wolhuter's (2009) claim that the Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 brought about two totally separate cultures, one for white and the other for black students.

I am referring here to Gebremedhin and Joshi's (2016) claim that under the Bantu Education Act of 1953, segregation and racial paternalism characterised education, in propagating the idea that the 'Bantu' (Black African) mind was different from supposedly superior white minds. Bantu education, however, was not the first racially biased policy to be implemented in South Africa. For example, after the Apprenticeship Act of 1922, a situation existed wherein the technical colleges sector developed rapidly to provide technical training for those already engaged in practical, on-the-job learning in apprenticeships (Akoojee *et al.*, 2005). In fact, the college sector became directly aligned with the needs of the industrial sector in a racially defined model. In 1923, the Higher Education Act (Act 30 of 1923) declared certain technical colleges to be places of Higher Education (Raju, 2004). In time, these colleges

came to offer community courses other than those related to the theoretical aspects of apprentice training (Raju, 2004).

By the 1960s, Chisholm (1992) notes that a significant shift of white labour into management and service employment increased the pressure on the colour bar (race relations) in the workplace and on the technical college sector (Akoojee *et al.*, 2005). This situation occurred because of an escalating shortage of skilled and high-level personnel to meet the needs of commerce and industry in the country. Even though the future needs for greater numbers of skilled workers were anticipated, attempts to develop these from within the black population were confounded by the logic of apartheid (Chisholm, 1992). Indeed, technical education was still not considered as the province of black people, even though the colour bar was 'floated upwards' in the boom years of the 1960s (Chisholm, 1992:11).

In fact, Ngcwangu (2014:161) holds that Crankshaw (1994) notes that the contradictions of apartheid policy were facilitated by the convergence of certain interests of employers, namely the state and white labour. He was referring to the practice of allocating semi-skilled and machine-operative work to Africans while reserving the skilled trades largely for whites. This was a method how the state and employers resolved the chronic shortage of skilled white labour (Ngcwangu, 2014:161). Nevertheless, a set of leading metropolitan colleges were allowed to move into the tertiary education sector in the late 1960s through the Advanced Technical Education Act of 1967, which permitted the establishment of Technikons. By the 1970s, the flight of whites from craftwork into management positions led to the growing corporate investment in the technical training for blacks.

In fact, prior to the Manpower Training Act of 1981, blacks (Africans) were excluded from apprenticeship programmes and their numbers never became large (Akoojee *et al.*, 2005). However, with regard to the apprenticeship programmes, McGrath (2010:526) contends that 'the 1980s and early 1990s saw a growing crisis for colleges as changes in employment and technology brought about the decline of apprenticeship'. Moreover, 'South Africa's experience of the global economic downturn of the early 1970s, coupled with its own particular political crisis, led to a sharp decline in apprenticeship numbers' (Akoojee & McGrath, 2009:8). This sharp decline in apprenticeship numbers led increasingly to a mismatch between the programme offerings of colleges and the demands made by industry for particular skills. In other words, there now were fewer apprentices for the programmes available, implying therefore that the supply of apprentices had also declined. Consequently, demand for apprentices by businesses was also reduced which allegedly led to colleges being largely written off by employers, government and the public as being a source of low quality and low status (Akoojee & McGrath, 2009).

A probable factor that could have contributed towards the employers' apathy towards black colleges graduates, could allegedly have been colleges' location far from industry. Therefore, it was not surprising that the numbers of indentured apprentices fell in the second half of the 1980s (Akoojee *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, a more likely, if not regrettable cause (because that probably led to the reduction in the number of black apprentices) may have been a lack of employment opportunities that were available to apprentices who had acquired the skills needed for employment. Second, colleges were located far from the business communities, therefore denying apprentices opportunities to hone their skills. In fact, it denied prospective (black) students the right to be mentored by highly skilled practitioners of their respective trades.

I therefore share Allan's (1997) reasoning that even though the purpose of education reflects the needs of the wider society, it was not surprising that the apartheid government used colleges to entrench their racially based division in labour. In this regard, Wedekind (2008) notes that Gamble (2003) reminds us that in using a historical lens, it may warn us of the dangers of overemphasising (or should I say the lack of) the integration of knowledge and skills. In this regard, Dewey (1923) holds that we learn only after the act is performed because we note results which we did not have before. This line of thinking will have relevance in the following section, where a previous political or rather racist bias continues to influence the lives and careers of students from disadvantaged communities despite South Africa being a democracy. According to Dewey's (1923:89) thinking, 'the past, in short, generates the problems which lead us to search the past for suggestion, and which supplies meaning to what we find when we search'.

5.2.2. Restructuring of TVET colleges post-1994

The period following 1994 proved to be significant in terms of education provision since the reality at the time revealed a college sector that was, according to Akoojee *et al.* (2008:254), unfit for the purpose of promoting social and economic well-being. In this regard, Dewey (1923:88) holds that 'a knowledge of the past and its heritage is of great significance when it enters into the present'. Indeed, there was (public) political pressure on the new state to deliver and to be seen to be delivering on this basic demand for equity in education which was part of a historical struggle. This thinking probably motivated Jansen and Taylor's (2003) argument that political movements made equity an important platform for educational change after apartheid.

This justifies Wallace's (2009) claim that since 1994, after forty years of apartheid, South Africa was faced with the need to transform the education system, inclusive of the college sector. The latter had been ravaged by years of racially skewed educational policy and international isolation. Indeed, the first step in the transformation of vocational education was

the establishment in 1995 of a single National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which aimed to promote the integration of the education and training systems under the auspices of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (DoE, 2008). With regard to vocational education, Badroodien (2004:20) holds that the term ‘technical and vocational education’ has come to encompass a wide variety of practices in South Africa, its content and meaning having shifted and changed many times. In fact, the poor state of the college sector in the first period (1994 to 2003) of post-apartheid, may probably have contributed to the design of the skills development legislation.

Hence, major strides that had been taken in the first ten years include the merger of 152 colleges throughout South Africa that started in 1998 in the Western Cape and was finalised there on September 1, 2002. In fact, 38 technical college sites merged into six institutions, though none of the existing sites have closed down, but will instead be administered by the larger institutions. It is not a process to reduce the system, but to increase efficiency, according to Keith Loynes, Chief Planner of Technical Colleges at the Western Cape Department of Education (2003). Furthermore, he continues, it is a two-part process to transform technical colleges into further education and training (FET) institutions (Loynes, 2003). It is much more than just merging, it is transformation, which involves the design of new training programmes on an ongoing basis, which will mean that the colleges will be responsive at an internationally competitive level. Powell (2013), however, notes that the skills legislation that initiated the structural college amalgamation, was developed against the backdrop of a neoliberal socio-economic policy framework whose focus was, amongst others, economic growth and fiscal prudence in terms of public expenditure.

This development has resulted in the unprecedented changes that the TVET college sector has undergone due to policy and legislative reforms (EDTP SETA, 2012). In fact, Badat and Sayed (2014:131), on the one hand, posit that ‘there was a flurry of policy activity, manifest in the production of green and white papers, acts, and regulations, all seeking to transform the nation’s educational system’. Wedekind (2008), on the other hand, notes that McGrath (2004) argues that there was a clear commitment to redress the past and improve quantity and quality of educational provision. These actions remind me of Dewey’s (1921:49) note that ‘man is capable, if he will but exercise the required courage, intelligence and effort, of shaping his own [educational] fate’. In this regard, I share Weimer and Vining’s (2004) position that:

Policy is about change, because it is through policy that governments seek to reform educational systems. For example, policy desires or imagined change – it offers an imagined future state of affairs, but in articulating desired change always offers an account somewhat more simplified than the actual realities of practice (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010:5).

This line of reasoning in the extract links to Powell's (2013) claim that TVET colleges were constituted as part of the broader struggle to resolve the economic, political and social contradictions (desired social changes) inherent in a tension between social redress and economic growth. One may therefore apportion part of the blame to what Badat and Sayed (2014:128) claim that 'the new [ANC-led] national government also had limited policy resources to draw on to articulate a clear and focused strategy for effecting social justice'.

This line of thinking relates to Chisholm's (2009:2) claim that the major challenges remained job creation and the role it plays in education and skills development. Hence, Akoojee *et al.* (2005:100) argue that 'the identification of skills as a constraint on [service] delivery, equity and competitiveness has led to a public debate about skills shortages in South Africa'. In this regard, for example, the implementation of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) system in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector, which included schools and TVET colleges, was an attempt to nurture the creative and innovative skills of students at an earlier stage.

However, concerns were also raised about the capabilities of TVET colleges to deliver on these expectations, in particular Donaldson's (2008) claim that there are widespread concerns about the quality of education and its adequacy in relation to the economic and social needs. In this regard, Minister Nzimande however, raised an important point at the TVET college summit, on ways of improving the status and effectiveness of South Africa's TVET college sector. At this event, the minister warned that 'South Africa's FET colleges need a radical overhaul to become colleges of choice that provide quality foundation programmes' (Nzimande, 2010:1). Therefore, the challenge is to transform the existing racially divided technical colleges into a coherent system that would address the vocational education and training needs of the 21st century (RSA, 2008:8).

In this regard, Whitehead (2005:46) notes that former President Nelson Mandela was especially alert to the challenge by arguing that 'the youth of our country are a valued possession of our nation. Without them, there can be no reconstruction and development; without them, there can be no future'. Indeed, Mandela's reference to the 'youth as the future' is at the heart of South Africa's reconstruction and development policy, which is also the focus of this study. This probably explains why South Africa's youth will ultimately need to reconstruct a nation that has been ravaged by the amoral practice of apartheid if education is to be the means by which Mandela's vision is to be realised. The Department of Education's White Paper 3 (RSA, 1997a:9) identified, that 'the inequities, imbalances and distortions that derive from its past and present structure must be addressed'. McGrath (2012:627), however, captures the seriousness of the educational challenges that are facing the TVET system in South Africa, which is to provide greater access to high-quality technical education for all.

Further developments of note include first, the South African government's announcement of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsgiSA) in 2005, which was motivated by the lack of intermediate and high-level skills that were identified as a constraint to accelerated and shared economic growth. Second, was the establishment of the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), whose task was the promotion of skills development in South Africa (RSA, 2008). In this regard, Akoojee and McGrath (2009:5) posit that 'skills development took on an important role in overall national development policy in South Africa after 2004 through the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA), and its skills development component, the Joint Initiative on Priority Skill Acquisition (JIPSA)', where a central task for ASGISA is to provide an overarching socio-economic perspective for all government departments to inform their own policy-making to ensure alignment and coordination between otherwise discrete development initiatives (RSA, 2008).

With regard to JIPSA, Akoojee and McGrath (2009:7) contend that 'JIPSA was not intended to be a long-term and systematic solution to South Africa's skills needs'. Furthermore, it was an attempt to build strategic partnerships around a series of particular projects that were seen as having the potential to making significant contributions to skills development, argue Akoojee and McGrath (2009). In this regard, I am referring to the R1.9 billion recapitalisation fund followed, which was a conditional grant that was primarily aimed at infrastructural development for modernised programme delivery at TVET colleges (RSA, 2008). Perhaps of equal importance was the introduction of a TVET college bursary scheme of R600 million which occurred in 2007 to pave the way for deserving students to enter TVET college programmes (Gewe, 2010).

TVET colleges however, may also benefit if they are tasked to realise the government's vision of improving the lives of (disadvantaged) South Africans. I am referring here to the three areas of concern for the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), namely first, the increasing number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET); second, the pervasive and persistent pattern of inequality in race, gender and class that continues to mark South African society and is reflected in access and success in education and training; and third, the continued disjuncture between education and training and the skills needs of the economy and the failure of TVET colleges to produce 'the productive citizens' hoped for in South Africa's 'skills revolution' (Powell, 2013:72). Even though a radical shift in policy content and direction has occurred from apartheid to post-apartheid, Odhav (2009) holds that numerous problems still persist within the higher education sector.

For example, Odhav (2009:33) maintains that policy weaknesses still exist in various areas, such as funding, redress and capacity building, particularly, at historically disadvantaged

institutions (HDIs) and for students from these disadvantaged backgrounds. This policy reality would therefore justify the government's pursuit of social goals after having established the structures and skills development legislation at TVET colleges. With regard to this issue, Ngcwangu (2014:151) holds that 'a key challenge facing the new government was to develop policies that could address this historical legacy'. On the other hand, the government must also oversee the integration of the South African economy into a hostile global economic system. In this regard, the government will look to neoliberal-inspired market-directed policies, allegedly more efficiency focused, in its pursuit of addressing its desired socio-economic targets of the high unemployment levels of the youth, low-skilled workers and the prevailing social inequalities.

5.2.3. Market-directed educational policies at TVET colleges

Brodie (2007) holds that a neoliberal approach (in education) strives to nurture or inculcate market logic in the state's thinking, to address their everyday, economic, and social issues. I argued in section 3.1 that neoliberal-based (market-oriented/directed) policies impose compliance with government's political will (Western *et al.*, 2007:1). In this regard, the Government Gazette (RSA, 1998a :16) holds that 'the TVET policy framework provides, in the main, a strategy for suppliers of education and training [TVET colleges] to respond to the labour market [for education & training] needs [skills] as identified by private and public employers'. The concept of the market presented by economic theory is as much an abstraction as the theory itself argues (Lefebvre & Vietorisz, 2007:146). Based on the previous arguments, I will interpret market-oriented policies as government policies that seek market-related solutions to social issues. In fact, Lefebvre and Vietorisz (2007) posit that real markets are fundamental and complex socio-economic institutions. In this regard, Chisholm (1997:50) holds that the policies that the ANC adopted show remarkable congruence with neoliberalism (market-oriented) strategies that favour economic to social solutions

To clarify the concept 'market', Martinez and Richardson (2003:883) posit that more scholars are studying the market, but our conceptual understanding of the term remains unclear. However, Pusser and Doane (2001) concede that the term 'market' is ubiquitous. Indeed, some scholars even refer to the market in the context of how state policy influences and interacts with higher education institutions (Richardson, Reeves-Bracco, Callan, & Finney, 1999; Williams, 1995; Martinez & Richardson, 2003). In this case, the market is somewhat of a discrete entity that surfaces in opposition to the state and higher education. It is this perception that will be pursued throughout this study, especially Berdahl's (1971) reference to the traditional discussion of governance as being concerned with the tension between higher education and the state.

Psacharopoulos, cited by Johnstone (1992), contends that the inclusion of the market and its relationship to higher education speaks to the tension between consumer (students and parents) and supplier (TVET colleges). For example, the state can use a combination of market forces and governance or policy authority to effect higher education performance (Richardson *et al.*, 1999). In this regard, Foucault (1980) holds that relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations, for example, production and kinship, for which they play at once a conditioning and a conditioned role. That said, I informed the reader in section 1.3 that I would interpret the market in the context of how state policy influences and interacts with higher education institutions (Martinez & Richardson, 2003). For example, higher education writers have used traditional concepts from economics and business as a springboard to understand what the market means in higher education and to describe the forces that are shaping the very business of higher education (Martinez & Richardson, 2003).

Nevertheless, despite numerous study referrals to the concept 'market', the market itself is never really defined (Martinez & Richardson, 2003:886). At best, Martinez and Richardson (2003:885 - 886) argue that one can surmise from the references that a higher education market does exist, which consists of the state, higher education – that is, universities, universities of technology and colleges – and consumers of higher education. Figure 5.1 depicts the static players' situation in the higher education market, but the figure does not indicate the nature of the interaction and how the market might be characterised as a result of that interaction (Martinez & Richardson, 2003). In this regard, the adjusted Figure 5.1 displays our conceptualisation of the state's higher education market, which is composed of the higher education community, the state and the consumers. Each interacts and influences the other in many ways (Martinez & Richardson, 2003).

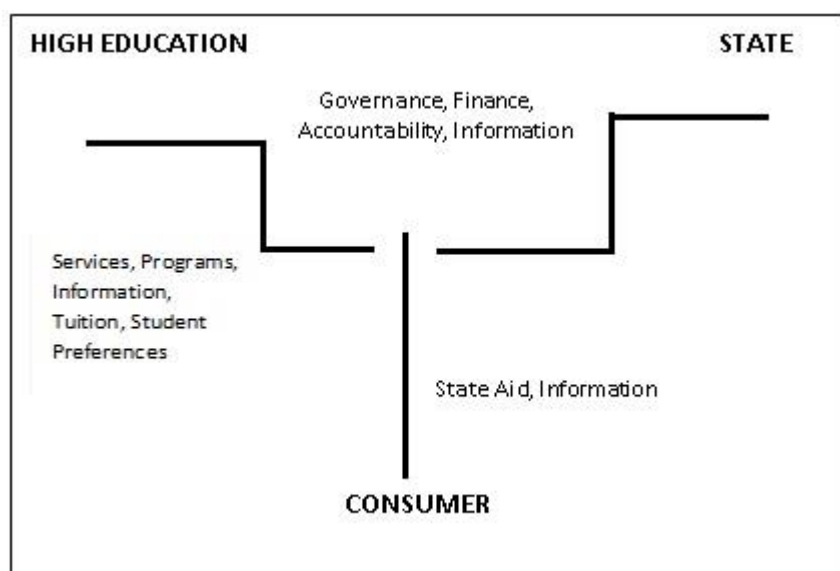


Figure 5. 1: Defining the Higher Education Market (Adjusted figure) [Source: Martinez & Richardson (2003:896)]

For example, the primary means of influence in the interaction between the state and consumers is largely defined by the amount of aid available for the student. Conversely, consumers (students) may also communicate information to policy makers (Martinez & Richardson, 2003), while the state's governance structure defines how higher education and the state communicate. The same probably applies in defining the interaction between state and higher education with respect to issues such as finance, accountability and information. And lastly, the reaction between higher education and consumers is probably defined by the exchange/sharing of information, with respect to the services, and learning programmes, tuition that educational institutions provide.

However, in situations where the state holds a disproportionate amount of influence compared to that of consumers and higher education, Martinez and Richardson (2003:898) contend that 'the market is best characterised as [being] regulated'. In such a market, institutions are constrained by the regulations that limit their capacity to exhibit autonomous behaviour and therefore institutional action often requires state approval. For example, states may commonly regulate programme offerings and oversee fiscal (financial spending) management (Martinez & Richardson, 2003). I, however, shall prefer a balanced market, even though balanced markets may be the exception rather than the rule, and no subject, state, consumer or higher education has a disproportionate share of influence (Martinez & Richardson, 2003). In this regard, higher education will be organised and financed in a way that contributes to this distribution; for example, the exchange of information will exist among the three players.

These roles may change as state, market, and academic interests compete against each other (Martinez & Richardson, 2003). Shaw and Rab (2003:172) claim, on the one hand, that 'market-driven education [otherwise known as consumer-driven or outcomes-driven education] has become the clarion call heard throughout the educational system', whereas Marginson and Rhoades (2002: 282), on the other hand, posit that 'today higher education in every corner of the globe is being influenced by global economic, cultural, and educational forces'. In this regard, Neave and Van Vught (1994) posit that the neo-liberal pattern is to reduce state subsidisation of higher education, shifting costs to the market and consumers and to demand accountability for performance.

However, the institutional response to these market forces most typically comes in the form of an increased emphasis on workforce development (Shaw & Rab, 2003). Such a perception justifies a specific governmental political focus and its support of operational policies that were deemed necessary. As I indicated in section 5.1, Wedekind (2013) claims that since the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa has prioritised education and training to, among others, redress past injustice and develop skills for an industrialising economy. However, almost 20 years later, Wedekind (2013) rightfully claims first, that South

Africa's education system is still poorly regarded by the public and often referred to as being in a crisis. Second, an alleged perception exists that 'the inequalities of the colonial and apartheid periods have not lessened' (Wedekind, 2013:1).

In this regard, Schwartzman's (2013) note may provide an indication to a probable cause. In this regard, Schwartzman (2013:2) argues that a market-infused approach to education treats knowledge as a commodity whose exchange value is measured crudely by comparing the cost of acquiring a tangible certification of 'product acquisition' with the financial earnings the certification supposedly enables. I will therefore argue, based on Martinez and Richardson's (2003) reasoning, that higher education governance systems, in particular, should strive to effectively meet (in satisfying) the needs of consumers (generally students) of education. In the following section, I unpack the key policies that allegedly are designed to serve (satisfy) the needs of the consumer, primarily with respect to the students' progress and their performances.

5.3. Policies at TVET colleges

This section deals with some of the key market-oriented policies in education, in view of Wedekind's (2013) claim that the inequalities of the colonial and apartheid era have not lessened, and that, in fact, the education system does not actually deliver the skills required by the economy. This is evident after the government took the decision to revitalise TVET colleges, as stated earlier. Indeed, the government had to create an enabling policy environment that will be strengthening colleges and aligning them with the rest of the post-schooling system (ETDP SETA, 2012). Odhav (2009:33), on the one hand, holds that 'there is no doubt that post-apartheid South African higher education saw the creation of a vastly different and more complex policy environment'. On the other hand, there was also a concerted effort (from government) to unify and streamline the education system, to make it more efficient and effective.

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (RSA, 2013) shares this viewpoint that South Africa has been building a new education and training system, since the advent of a democratic government in 1994, whose goal has been to meet the needs of a democratic society. In fact, Wedekind (2013) holds that there is little evidence to suggest that the education system has deepened democratic values and practices. Indeed, policy developments have therefore been aimed at democratising the education system such as overcoming unfair discrimination, expanding access to education and training opportunities and improving the quality of education, training and research (RSA, 2013:1). In this regard, Hanushek and Wöfsmann (2007) hold that policies must be viewed as evolutionary, where ongoing evaluation permits the discarding of policies that are ineffective while expanding those that are productive. Badat and Sayed (2014:128) share this view by arguing that the

‘post-1994 education policy is predicated on the principle of equality of opportunity in relation to provision, access, and outcomes’.

However, despite very significant growth, South Africa still has a post-school education and training system that does not offer sufficient places to the many youths and adults seeking education and training. In this case, expansion is needed, both in terms of numbers of available places and the types of education and training that are available (RSA, 2013). Indeed, Akoojee’s (2008:298) analysis of South Africa’s TVET policy debate reveals that ‘a tension exists between a neoliberal discourse of college transformation into autonomous, efficient and market-led institutions serving the needs of industry and a continual espousal of a broader set of educational values around learning, personal development and citizenship’. However, the broad transformational challenge for colleges also includes an assumption of the need to respond, primarily to the pressures of globalisation through greater national competitiveness (Akoojee, Gewer & McGrath, 2005).

This challenge is also coupled with the wastefulness of educational institutions, as I said in Section 1.3, and an economic recession that existed during the early 1990s. One can therefore appreciate why the goals of market-directed policies were steered towards the realisation of economic goals rather than that of social goals. As I argued earlier in this chapter, Soares *et al.* (2016:5) are of the opinion that higher education institutions are under pressure to educate a growing student population cost-effectively. Of particular note was the Government Gazette’s (RSA, 2015) response that policies and strategies for the public funding of TVET service at TVET colleges must be carefully considered, so that the economic and development challenges of the country can be tackled with maximum effectiveness. In fact, Akoojee *et al.* (2005:107) note that McGrath (2004) even suggested that policy should propose ways to make public providers, TVET colleges among others, more efficient and more responsive to the needs of industry.

This thinking would probably explain why Wedekind (2013) holds that, almost 20 years after democratisation in 1994, South Africa’s education system is poorly regarded by the public and often referred to as being in crisis. However, in order to succeed, colleges will need to innovate and manage systems that could develop the critical ability to implement policy plans aimed at promoting the social good. Gewer (2001:133), in particular, claims that ‘at the heart of TVET policy implementation is the push to transform public TVET colleges to become key drivers of the system’. In doing so, on the other hand, TVET colleges are positioned to respond to the current macro-strategies for human resource development. Although this view was recorded in 2001, it is still relevant today as it was then, because the development of TVET colleges to meet this goal is still on-going. On the other hand, in the past, education policy was taken for granted; in this case policy is clearly no longer taken for granted.

Today, however, education policies are the focus of considerable controversy and public contestation, with educational policy-making becoming highly politicised (Olssen *et al.*, 2004:2). Indeed, Brodie (2007:100), in particular, referred to ‘... neoliberal fundamentalists [in government] envision a state that both elevates the market over all else and adopt market logics to guide its own conduct’. This perception justifies Srivastava and Thomson’s (2009:73) statement that ‘to ensure [its] optimum efficiency and utilization, these policies and procedures need to be reviewed periodically’. Thus, the review process not only assesses the success or failure of the policy or procedure, it also encapsulates the implementation of these policies. This undertaking, indeed, describes my intention of what I shall be doing in the subsequent sections.

5.3.1. Further Education and Training Policy of 1998

The ETDP SETA (2012) report holds that, for the past 15 years, the TVET college sector has undergone unprecedented changes due to policy and legislative reforms. In fact, it links to Gewer’s (2010) claim that the transformation programme for TVET, established by the 1998 FET White Paper and enacted by the FET Act of that same year, was premised on the need for a more coordinated TVET system. In fact, the FET Act [98 of 1998] laid the first building blocks (foundations) for a transformed TVET college landscape in the post-apartheid South Africa (ETDP SETA, 2012:15). Therefore, Gewer (2010) holds that the conceptual framework for this TVET system hinges on the notion of a system of providers all operating within a particular band.

The challenge, according to Gewer (2010), was to create coherence within the boundaries of the band, that is, Levels 2 to 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). On the other hand, argues Gewer (2001), the NQF was one of the first TVET policies that was institutionalised in the FET Act of 1998, which provides the basis for the establishment of public and private FET institutions, the precursor to the TVET of today. More importantly, this body provided the vehicle for overcoming the traditional divide between education and training by creating ‘an integrated national framework for student achievements’ for colleges in developing programmes that will be in line with the NQF requirement of a fundamental mind-shift (Gewer, 2001:142-143). What actually was required, was for colleges to overcome the imbalances that exist between theory and practice.

Where practical experiences are needed for the achievement of programme outcomes, the focus is now on the integration between knowledge and skill (Gewer, 2001). Therefore, the FET Act of 1998 and subsequent government reiterations thereof (published in the Gazette) have guided and governed the development of the TVET Colleges from 1998 to 2006. According to the ETDP SETA’s (2012:17) publication ‘the real transformation of the TVET landscape came into effect when the TVET colleges were established and operated under

the authority of the FET Act (98 of 1998)'. Indeed, Papier (2012:1) notes that this piece of legislation spoke clearly and rationally of the urgent need for a new TVET system, using language to which we would, all too soon, become accustomed. Words like responsiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, clients and stakeholders may have alarmed some because of their market-driven tone.

Furthermore, the Act of 1998 set out a broad and long-term national framework for the transformation of curricula, learning and teaching, qualifications, funding, quality assurance and new institutional arrangements, including what colleges will offer. According to Gewer (2001:139), 'the FET Act seeks to equalise the institutional landscape by providing all colleges with "progressive autonomy" and ownership'. Since then, it has 'set out a broad and long-term national framework for the transformation of curricula, learning and teaching, qualifications, funding, quality assurance and new institutional arrangements' (RSA, 2008:9).

This is what the policy has promised, but it seems we are still a long way off from achieving it, argues Papier (2012). In this regard, Mashau and Mutshaeni (2014) argue that problems that arise in the implementation process make it less likely that objectives will be achieved in many government programmes. Moreover, the implementation problems may also damage the morale and external reputations of agencies in charge of implementation. So much so, that one wonders whether White Paper 4 (RSA, 1998a) should not be revisited given our new-found insights into what is possible in TVET and what is not, or do we continue to hold out promises and suggestions which can never be fulfilled because it is just too hard, too exhausting, and too contentious? We therefore have to examine the reasons for this systemic lethargy and take decisive action if we are to retain the many positive and visible signs of change in the TVET sector.

Omar (1998), nevertheless, concedes that the adoption of the national policy and legislation for promoting the development of an FET system represents a step forward. I share this viewpoint, because the policy created the space, which, for the first time, provided a policy and legislative framework that applies to all colleges and providers of TVET programmes. In this regard, colleges and schools as clearly distinct institutions from each other that potentially serve different functions in the TVET system, argues Gewer (2001). One can therefore conclude that the Act of 1998 did not entirely meet its requirements to guide TVET colleges to fulfil their unique role to skill the nation's youth and therefore had to be revisited or redesigned, as the FET Colleges Act of 2006, for the advancement of the transformation of TVET colleges.

5.3.2. Further Education and Training Policy of 2006

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2008a: 39) notes that the FET Colleges Act of 2006 supersedes the FET Act of 1998. Hence, the reference by

Naledi Pandor, the then minister of education, to the Act of 2006 as one of the most significant legislative enactments in the area of skills development and vocational education, according to Pretorius (2007).

The aim of the Act of 2006 is to regulate further education and training, which is defined as ‘all learning and training programmes leading to qualifications at Levels 2 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework’ (OECD, 2008b:39). This view links to the ETDP SETA report’s (2012:13) claim that ‘it is prescribed in the FET College Act 16 of 2006 that the FET colleges should “enable” students to acquire knowledge, practical skills, and applied vocational and occupational competence, in order to enter employment; a vocation, occupation or trade; or higher education ‘.

In this regard, the Act of 2006 removed ambiguities that have previously been associated with the 1998 FET Act, which did not differentiate clearly between colleges and high schools. Moreover, the Act has clearly established the possibility of greater articulation and mobility between colleges and universities. This capability has probably created the space for prospective students who wish to further their studies at universities, but who cannot be accommodated due to limited space and/or access. In a more practical approach to TVET college operations, one may regard first, the issue pertaining to the employment of college lecturers, which the Act placed on a firm footing. Second, the Act positions colleges to teach skills that are clearly recognised and identified in AsgiSA and JIPSA (RSA, 2008).

In section 5.2.2, I have touched on both acronyms, for example the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition or JIPSA, which according to O’ Malley (2006) holds that this new institution is led by a committee of the Deputy President, key ministers, business leaders, trade unionists and education and training providers or experts. Its job will be to identify urgent skills needs and quick and effective solutions in this regard. Among the solutions which JIPSA probably can suggest, are the special training programmes, or bringing back retirees or drawing in new immigrants where necessary. With regard to the acronym ASGISA, which was approved by cabinet in July 2005, significance to South Africans was spelled out at the end of the cabinet Lekgotla in July 2002 by former President Mbeki, who argued that the challenge facing government was not to change government policies but to ensure that they were implemented. In other words, ASGISA aims at improving policy implementation and economic growth.

Based on the information that has been presented in this section so far, I argue that the FET College Act of 2006 clearly demarcates TVET colleges as distinct educational institutions from schools, as well as with regard to its operations and goals. In fact, I argue that the institutionalisation in the Act of 2006 provides the watershed in the promotion of efficient educational practices and desired outcome at TVET colleges. This line of thinking ties to my

argument in Section 2.2 that ‘ours is a dynamic [educational] world, [which] appeals to fictional fixed foundations [policies]’ (Kadlec, 2007:12). Indeed, the Act may probably make educators feel more secure, but it seriously impedes our efforts to grapple intelligently with an educational world that is ‘always’ in the making (Kadlec, 2007:12).

For example, Omar (1998) contends that, the FET Act of 1998 clearly repealed the Correspondence College Act No. 59 of 1965, even though there was uncertainty as to how the new Act would affect technical colleges. One could probably argue that the same could be said of the FET Colleges Amendment Act (No. 3 of 2012). Since the FET Colleges Act of 2006 was amended in 2012, it shifted the administrative function of adult learning centres and TVET colleges from the provincial to the national (higher) education department (Sheppard & Ntenga, 2013). In this case, the White Paper holds that these TVET colleges became a national competence and the responsibility of the national Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). This is a significant development. From 2013, for the first time, the colleges are accountable primarily to the national government rather than to the provinces (RSA, 2013).

Significantly, they (the TVET colleges) have been renamed officially as technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges. Allegedly, this name will better define their main role in the diversified post-school education and training system (RSA, 2013). In this regard, Shaorshadze and Krishnan (2013:6) posit, from an Ethiopian perspective, that ‘the discourse on TVET has been reinvigorated’. First, during the last decade, the issue of TVET has been linked to topics such as the Millennium Development Goals, in which under-development has often being attributed as the consequence of the lack of skills, the role to which TVET colleges have been assigned as an obvious solution. Second, as a result of the demographic transition, the youth in many developing countries make up a large share of the population. However, in these countries, youth unemployment is an economic and social problem and is increasingly feared to create political problems. Therefore, according to Shaorshadze and Krishnan (2013), TVET is seen as a solution to these issues. In fact, it was hoped that the technological advances of the last couple of decades and globalisation would improve opportunities for all.

Indeed, Shaorshadze and Krishnan’s (2013) comment would probably be explained by the Continuing Education and Training Act 2006 (ACT 16 of 2006), which set out the National Norms and Standards for funding Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges since the funding norms are pro-poor in that they accord access to those (students) who cannot afford to pay fees through a bursary scheme that is administered by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). In fact, the funding norms emphasise the importance of concentrating public funds on training that is not being adequately financed by

the private sector, and this would to a large extent contribute to the training of disadvantaged students.

The government, therefore, expects that TVET colleges will become the cornerstone of the country's skills development system. In fact, government's contribution towards ensuring that college enrolments increases, by means of its assistance as providing for the poor deserving students by the NSFAS, become a reality. Indeed, enrolments have actually been increasing rapidly over the past few years (discussed in Chapter 6) in order to address the country's acute skills shortages (RSA, 2013:12). In this regard, the Human Resources Development Review (HRDR) (McCord, 2003) holds that the skills shortages have contributed to limited investment, low growth and continued high unemployment. It still remains a problematic phenomenon to resolve over the short term and will therefore be discussed in greater depth in the following section.

5.3.3. Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 (SDA)

Sheppard and Ntenga (2013:243) contend that 'governments are increasingly recognising the importance of technical education and training (TVET) systems for economic development because of their focus on skills for the labour market'. This thought links to Bhorat, Cassim and Teng's (2014:7) argument that 'the South African economy is increasingly demanding highly skilled and educated workers to match the growth of skilled occupations', according to the HRDR's (McCord, 2003:33) claim that it is 'essential to create low as well as high-end employment'. Hence Bergeron and Martin's (2015:1) argument that 'the nation's economy demands that workers possess increasing levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities that are best acquired through postsecondary education'

This reasoning is probably explained by Bhorat *et al.*'s (2014:6) Labour Market Intelligence Partnership (LMIP) report findings that 'the structural foundation of the South African economy has [...] become more capital-intensive over the past 15 years'. Against this background, I argue that Balwanz and Ngcwangu's (2016:31) claim has relevance that 'the "scarce skills" discourse has been used for nearly 40 years to explain the persistence of poverty, unemployment, inequality and a lacklustre economic growth in South Africa'. However, the scarce skills discourse offers an explicit challenge to post-school institutions, because it seeks to influence higher education funding, programming and mission so that it is oriented around market demands (Balwanz & Ngcwangu, 2016). However, market demands are beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, Sheppard and Ntenga (2013:241) argue that 'most business organisations and government[s] recognise that South Africa suffers from a shortage of skills, including artisans, technicians and engineers'.

Indeed, this perception led to the World Competitiveness Yearbook ranking of South Africa as last out of the 58 countries profiled for the availability of skilled labour. On this issue, Mayer *et al.* (2011:27) argue that:

The formal education system has failed to fulfil its purpose of equipping young people with the relevant educational and skills competencies required to access available job opportunities in the formal and informal economies ... [g]iven the limited number of work opportunities available ...

This thinking is reflected in the extract which explains why the OECD (2008b:41) publication refers to skills development as a desired education outcome, and is addressed in terms of the Skills Development Act (SDA) of 1998 as a desired outcome. However, Ngcwangu (2014:159) reasons that even though ‘the skilling process is driven by a largely neoliberal assumption about economic transformation’, the process does arguably not sufficiently interrogate the need for a skills agenda, which, in turn, is linked to the fundamental transformation of society.

Skills development is therefore firstly the responsibility of the National Ministry of Labour, which administers a statutory National Skills Authority and the SETAs in covering all sectors of the economy and, secondly, that of the DHET. Indeed, Babson (2014:157) holds that Akoojee (2012) notes that the newly established DHET constitutes a ‘re-positioning with the potential to shift the entire skills development debate in South Africa and forever change the education, training and skills development system’. However, as I argued in Section 1.1, Badroodien (2004) holds that in 1994, the incoming South African government inherited an extremely poor skills regime. It is time to unpack what we understand by the concept ‘skill’.

Allais (2012:634) holds that the term is a highly contested one. For example, sociologists who study the labour market, argue that it is socially and politically constructed, whereas Sheppard and Ntenga (2013:153) interpret the term as being a particular form of task-oriented work and therefore signals a normative departure from an all-encompassing educational process, integrated with training. Although knowledge, experience and cleverness all contribute to skill, ultimately skill lies not in the characteristics of individual workers, but in relations between workers and employers...’ (Allais, 2012:634). In this regard, the Department of Labour identifies the aim of the SDA as follows: to improve the working skills of South Africans so that the economy can grow and all South Africans can live a better life (RSA, 2001c:25).

However, by aligning the initial education more closely to particular vocations and tasks demanded in the labour market, it is alleged that the problem of mismatch, often seen as a main source of the high degree of unemployment in developing countries, may be reduced (Eichhorst, Rodriguez-Planas, Schmidt & Zimmermann, 2012:1). On the one hand, Eichhorst

et al. (2012:3) noted that, in developing countries, the education of youths with practical-oriented vocational skills is considered a promising means to create flexible and self-responsible learning attitudes, in order to prepare youths for the requirements of the modern workplace. On the other hand, given the poor skills and low productivity of firms, the investment in vocational education is often justified as the means to promote a bottom-up labour-market transformation (Eichhorst *et al.*, 2012:3).

Archer (2012:158) however claims that 'no one is satisfied with the volume of skills training taking place in the South African labour market'. Moreover, the serious deficiency in our 21st century policy array that probably led to the current skills training deficit was attributed to two distinct reasons. These are that:

- (i) We live in an age in which education and training are prominent items that are accorded legal recognition as every individual's human right (entitlement).
- (ii) Many of us believe strongly that the increased productive capacities that come with skills training have spill-over effects beneficial to ourselves, and to others in society (Archer, 2012:159).

Indeed, the HRDS publication (2010-2030) notes that there are 'both anecdotal and empirical evidence of skills shortages in a number of occupations and economic sectors within South Africa' (ETDP SETA report, 2012:21). In this regard, Rodrik (2006) claims that it is widely held that low levels skills act as a significant constraint on economic growth, and therefore skills improvement are reflected in the government's official policy document.

Moreover, the thought that 'there is a tangible problem arising from the mismatch between the supply of and demand for skills in the South African labour market' (EDTA, 2012:21), is very disturbing. South Africa, in particular, has extremely high rates of unemployment and under-employment. This is confirmed in the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) Bulletin (2015:1), that 'South Africa's youth unemployment rate is amongst the highest in the world. Therefore, one of the greatest socio-economic problems currently facing South Africa is youth unemployment '. In this regard, Rodrik's (2006:11) response was that 'unemployment of the scale experienced by South Africa could also have been avoided if young, unskilled job seekers could be absorbed into the informal sector'. The most prevalent unemployment among the youth is said to be between the ages of 20-25 (ETDP SETA report, 2012:21). To complicate matters further, over 50% of these young people without a school-leaving or matriculation certificate, are unemployed.

Based on these statistics, the ETDP SETA report (2012:21) notes that the planning commission's diagnostic report (2011) claims that 'skills acquisition is out of line with the needs of a modernising economy'. Even though the trend seems to be that the economy is generating large numbers of low and semi-skilled jobs, there is still a shortage of supply of

such skills from the education and training system. In this regard, Sheppard and Ntenga's (2013:241) posit that 'skills development is critical for absorbing the economically marginalised', that is NEET⁶ students, who need to be absorbed into 'a vibrant, innovative and internationally competitive economy'. Another problem that Allais (2012:637) touches on relates to Bosch and Charest's (2010) claim that 'developments in vocational training cannot be understood solely by examining the inner dynamics of education and training systems'.

Indeed, these youths will most probably have to be skilled at TVET colleges via their NC(V) programmes. That is, according to Sheppard and Ntenga (2013:241), if an effective TVET college system is actually operational in South Africa, it should be a critical component of a well-established, good quality, post-school education system. Such a perception will be in line with Allais' (2012) thinking that vocational education aims to develop vocational competence and identity and that students are expected to develop a high level of autonomy. That includes an understanding of the entire work process and of the wider industry, and an integration of manual and intellectual tasks (Allais, 2012). Since these skills are essential in the work environment, students are therefore prepared for careers in an occupational labour market which relates occupations to the corresponding tracks of vocational education (Allais, 2012). Thus, this explains why Allais (2012) claims that the discourse of skills is far too socially atomising while also overburdening to the individual.

I will therefore argue that the said aims of vocational education, as previously mentioned, would be an appropriate route for the NEET youths to be skilled as active workers. Although Stumpf, Papier, McBride and Needham (2012:107) posit that 'the NEET problem is not unique to South Africa, since it arises in many other countries', the size and extent of the problem, particularly in South Africa, is worrying. Therefore, many countries are strengthening the vocational part of the educational or schooling system and bringing existing vocational education and training systems closer to the current needs of the labour market. Most importantly, the government is addressing the shortages of skills by investing substantially in TVET colleges to increase the overall enrolments in the sector (Sheppard & Ntenga, 2013:242).

Ngcwangu (2014:151), however, holds that 'the key problem with skills development in South Africa is the underlying qualification model, which, despite rhetoric to the contrary, is based on, and reinforces atomised [reduced to smaller units] skills for fragmented jobs'. Whatever the case may be, Badat (2009:4) holds that 'it is not disputed that education must cultivate the knowledge, competencies and skills that enable graduates to contribute to economic growth, since such growth can facilitate initiatives geared towards greater social equality and social development'. This perception links to the LMIP report's findings, according to Bhorat

⁶ Not in education, employment or training, the term NEET has been coined by Cloete (2009).

et al., 2014:16), which suggest that the TVET college system should, in theory, be a critical part of skills development in South Africa. However, the (limited) institutional capacity confirms the inadequacy of addressing the skills demand because of the (questionable) quality and variation of programmes offered.

In summary, I argue that the SDA brought about many changes to traditional skills development. For example, the Act created new structures for training, new funding incentives to encourage more training, new forms of learning programmes and new ways of assisting all people to get skills and jobs (RSA, 2001c:25). In this regard, the SDA, through its introduction of the Learnership programmes, effectively signalled the expansion and modernisation of vocational education.

Even more recently, Snodgrass's (2016:4) notes that 'graduates without the requisite knowledge, skills and values will not have access to the world of work' indeed sounds plausible. In this regard, the EDTA SETA's report (2012:18) suggests, that 'where an FET college is found to lack the capacity to deliver the skills needed for the economy, the SETAs should invest in building such capacity'. I will now unpack the significant role that SETAs supposedly have to play with regard to TVET colleges.

5.3.4. The Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)

Ngcwangu (2014:157) posits that 'the promulgation of the Skills Development Act (SDA No.97 of 1998) and the Skills Development Levies Act (SDLA No. 9 of 1999) ushered in a new era for the South African skills development system'. Indeed, these acts of government saw the establishment of the institutional Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), which are public entities with the primary objective of collecting skills levies from the employers within each sector in terms of the Skills Development Act and making the money available within the sector for education and training (Mncwango, Ngazimbi & Twalo, 2012:14). Bhorat (2004:54), however, contends that the purpose of the SETAs is to utilise the levies provided for in the SDA to narrow the gap between the demand and supply of skilled workers.

This intention is in line with the SETAs' brief to ensure that the supply characteristics of workers are upgraded through the process of education and training, in a manner that meets the companies' labour-demand needs. Indeed, it is only in meeting the needs of companies that SETAs can be said to have succeeded in their tasks. This thinking links to Kingdon and Knight's (2005:29) note that SETAs are mandated to encourage TVET colleges in the provision of skills for work, thus verifying that the main purpose of the TVET colleges is to prepare students for the workplace and/or self-employment. It is therefore essential that colleges develop and maintain close working relationships with employers in their areas of study. Nevertheless, in section 4.3.5, Mayer *et al.* (2011:27) argued that the dysfunctionality

of the education system, via its lack of alignment with the skills required by the South African labour market, is the fundamental reason why young men and woman exit the system, without being employed.

However, establishing closer partnerships (working relationships) between colleges and employers will most probably assist the colleges to locate work-integrated learning opportunities for their students. Moreover, colleges will also assist in student placement after they have completed their qualifications (RSA, 2013:16). Furthermore, SETAs also approve or reject workplace skills plans that are submitted to them by employers for the disbursement of funds on this basis (Gewe, 2001:149), thus confirming the Department of Labour's publication (RSA, n.d.:4) claim that the main function of SETAs is to contribute to the raising of skills and therefore nurturing skills of the employed or those wanting to be employed in their sector. This perception is confirmed by the minister of education's speech that SETAs have an in-depth knowledge of the labour market and should therefore have contact with virtually all employers in the country, according to the Department of Basic Education (RSA, 2011). In having said that, even though SETAs are ideally placed to assist educational institutions in placing their students in the workplace to gain experiences, this has not been happening' (RSA, 2011), which links to Birkin's claim in the Mail & Guardian (2012:38) that, like the SETAs, 'the colleges [allegedly] are ineffective to our national needs'. Hence, this poor outcome is probably indicative of the nature of the SETAs' relationship with colleges.

However, the new measures that Minister Nzimande (2011:14) announced during his budget vote speech are aimed at ensuring that training carried out by the SETAs was more focused on skills for the workplace and employability of school leavers and graduates. Even though the minister's announcement was still rhetorical, it was meant to strengthen the governance and management of the SETAs so that they could become effective. This was, indeed, encouraging news for the sector and for students at large. As I argued in section 4.3.5, we are not teaching our students robust academic skills that will prepare them for work in any meaningful way. However, the crucial issue that needs to be addressed now, according to Spaul (2015:4), is to develop any suitable plan to reform these curricula, including the way that they are or should be taught.

5.3.5. National Certificate (Vocational) – NC(V) Curriculum

Lawton (1995:26) however, holds that a government can retain its legitimacy, if its education system can be seen as efficient and effective in achieving desired outcomes, in other words, that it works. In this regard, Stutter (1996) holds that OBE was an ineffective education system, as it did not raise education standards, nor rendered education relevant or turned every student into a winner (academically). It had to be replaced. In fact, Dewey (1938:78)

holds that 'the way out of an educational system that made the past an end in itself is to use the past as a means of understanding the present'.

The White Paper (RSA, 2013) notes that a new National Curriculum (Vocational) was introduced in 2007 as a general vocational programme which included both academic and vocational subjects. The main aim of the NC(V) programme has been to ensure that TVET colleges meet the growing need for vocational and technical training in the country. However, Branson *et al.* (2015), on the one hand, contend that the introduction of the NC(V) syllabus proved to be more academically challenging than the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED) courses and resulted in high subject failure rates and low certification rates around 10% nationally in 2007. For example, evaluations have shown that the NC(V) curriculum for fundamentals such as Mathematics and English might be tougher than the equivalent grades 10-12 material in mainstream schools (Branson *et al.*, 2015).

The NC(V) curriculum does include extensive practical components (students are chiefly familiarised with the workshops), which have not been implemented properly in many colleges. As a result, learners often exit these programmes without the necessary practical skills to be employed in the business sector. This is therefore one of the main criticisms of the NC(V), according to the White Paper (RSA, 2013). Nevertheless, the ETDP SETA's report (2012:16) regards the introduction of the NC(V) programme in 2007 as 'a major curriculum policy shifts during the past decade'. Its implementation however, created various problems since lecturers now found themselves teaching two very different cohorts of students in the same classroom: that is, those who had done Grade 12 and those who had left school after Grade 9.

Powell (2013:69) nevertheless holds that 'the shift in South Africa from the NATED 191 programmes, which were job-specific, towards the National Curriculum (Vocational) NC(V), combined generic skills with a job-specific orientation', representing what Lewis (1994:211) claims to be a shift away from job-specific vocationalism towards generic-skills vocationalism. Indeed, this programme was designed to provide both theory and practice in real or simulated workplace environments. I therefore argue that this learning route may probably provide opportunities for those students who are academically less inclined to proceed towards a recognised qualification in a chosen field of study. However, despite the negativity surrounding the NATED 191 programme, 'there is concern that the content of the NC(V) does not accurately align with the skills requirements in the industries concerned' (Gewer, 2010:10). This explains why people in industry still advocate that the NATED 191 courses should not have been abandoned, but simply modernised.

In this regard, the FET Round Table's document (2010a) notes reports that the NC(V) is regarded as a comprehensive curriculum at colleges, because it offers programmes of study

in fourteen vocational fields in a range of economic activities. Gewer (2010), on the one hand, notes that the rationale for introducing the NC(V) in 2007 was first to address the poor quality and shortcomings regarding relevance in the college curriculum. On the other hand, a fundamental error may have been created in presenting the NC(V) as a replacement for the NATED 191 courses, when these programmes could be seen as serving different purposes (FET Round Table, 2010). Stumpf *et al.* (2012) support this perception.

They hold that the Minister of Higher Education and Training later rescinded an earlier decision to abandon the NATED programmes in 2010 until such time as new policy on matters concerning occupational qualifications had been developed. As part of the DHET's implementation of a turnaround strategy for the TVET college sector, both the NC(V) and NATED programmes will be reviewed, argue Branson *et al.* (2015). Moreover, they continue that administrative weaknesses are being addressed, by instituting minimum attendance criteria and reviewing funding norms.

Consider for example, Table 5.3.1, which clearly illustrates that substantial increases in the enrolment figures of young people into the NC(V) programmes was recorded over the period 2007-2009, with figures quadrupling over this period.

Table 5. 1: Enrolment in the NCV programmes, 2007–2009

YEAR	2007	2008	2009
NC(V)	26 451	67 512	122 921

(Source: Gewer, 2010:10)

Furthermore, this trend of substantial increases in enrolment has been maintained for the period 2010-2013 as is depicted in the recently DHET Statistics on Post-School Education (RSA, 2015) released in March, including 2010 (130 039), 2011 (124 658), 2012 (140 575) and 2013 (154 960). Overall, the trend is upward, except for 2011 which only shows a decrease of 4%, before it starts to increase for 2012 and 2013 respectively.

These substantial increases may probably be attributed to a multi-campus structure at TVET colleges. Given these statistics, it must therefore be assumed that the NC(V) in its current form will be required for as long as the basic education system is not producing school leavers who possess adequate skills to enter occupational learning programmes (FET Round Table, 2010). However, the education authorities argue that these aspects of the current programme should not be a permanent feature of the post-school education and training system, but it may be necessary for the next ten years.

In summary, I argue that while there may be some (reflected in the data provided) support for the NC(V) as a qualification route for a large number of young people who have not obtained matric, the implementation of the programme has not been without problems. In this regard, Allais' (2012) suggestion that 'the German vocational model argues for apprenticeship into an occupation, and against training for a specific job or just getting someone employable' may perhaps require further research. The former is more comprehensive in the preparation of our youth for the future and not only includes the required skills but also a thorough introduction into the world of work.

5.3.6. National Plan for TVET colleges in South Africa

The FET Round Table (2010b) document informs us that the National Plan for Further Education and Training committed government to increasing youth and adult participation in TVET colleges to 1 million enrolled students by 2014. This viewpoint is allegedly in line with the National Plan's emphasis as:

'...the need for initial vocational education to focus on general vocational programmes which support the development of vocational skills with a breadth of knowledge and a strong general education foundation. Linked to this, is the role of vocational education and training institutions in supporting knowledge development within occupational programmes' (ETDP SETA report, 2012:17).

Indeed, to conceptualise the notion of vocational education and training, I refer to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences; that is, in addition to students acquiring practical skills and understanding the knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (RSA, 2008). However, Gewer (2010:7) holds that there is a 'need for initial vocational education to focus on general vocational programmes, which support the development of vocational skills with a breadth of knowledge and a strong general education foundation'.

Furthermore, among the key issues that have been featured, is a coordinated approach to the growth in the TVET subsystem. In this regard, it spells out how college enrolments should be managed; for example, the National Plan (RSA, 2008) envisaged that the sector would:

- Be differentiated and responsive to geographical and sector challenges;
- Offer high-quality and relevant programmes at multiple sites of learning supported by appropriate infrastructure, equipment and ICT support;
- Address low retention and throughput rates through quality support interventions;

- Tailor institutional practices of teaching and learning to the needs of the underprepared young people who seek further education and training opportunities; and
- Have strong linkages with industry that support workplace opportunities for students to gain the necessary work experience as part of their qualification requirements (FET Round Table, 2010a:10).

In reference to this outline, I argue that the plan actually represents a road map for the management of TVET colleges. Incidentally, the plan also signals the need for greater coordination and a shift to a nationally-driven approach to growing the sector (Gewe, 2010). However, I am also familiar with the fact that the changes and challenges which the National Plan proposes, as reflected in the Government Gazette of 12 December 2008, will take time to deliver the desired results.

In this case, I am referring to the challenges that have to be addressed; that is, in spite of the government embracing neoliberalism through a GEAR strategy, outcomes in education still do not meet expectations. Akoojee and McGrath (2004) concur. They claim that GEAR actually led to depressed public expenditure on education, leading to poorer provision in terms of quality and quantity. Thus, despite the best efforts of South Africa's educational leadership and the substantial investment in resources, the results and outcomes are disappointing (OECD, 2008b).

One can probably explain the failure of academic outcomes to realise the desired expectations by referring to a number of contributing factors. These, for example, include competition from other social sectors or difficulties in redirecting funds from personnel to non-personnel expenditure and the inefficiencies in education management and delivery (OECD, 2008b). Nevertheless, whatever the causes may be, it would seem as if neoliberal-based (market-oriented) policies, which favour, among others, deregulation and privatisation, if prescribed within the GEAR strategy, may, according to Khosa (2001:10), actually have increased inequalities. Interestingly though, it is the disadvantaged students that are more likely to have been negatively affected by the state's austere economic programmes than the affluent students who were in a more favourable financial position. In this regard, Akoojee and McGrath (2008:199) argue that the college sector would have to respond appropriately to the critical skills agenda, as it was placed at the centre of the national skills agenda.

I, however, will argue that education is a time-related process which will not necessarily produce the desired output in the short term of a few years. The key issue, the appropriateness of policies in the TVET sector, remains a challenge. In this regard, I am referring to 'the generation of a formidable architecture of policies and laws to govern education [which] was set in place, with [too] ambitious goals and lofty ideals for new

programs, schools, colleges' (Jansen & Taylor, 2003:9). The question raised, however, relates to the fairness and justice, that is, constitutionally, with which these policies were actually designed and executed, which is the issue that I will discuss in the following section. However, for South Africans, I argue, it's not the justice of the policies that matter now in our democracy, it's rather the effectiveness of policy in addressing the high unemployment, racial inequalities and poverty in our society, which ultimately may threaten the stability of our democracy.

5.3.7. Constitutionality of market-directed policies

Bell and Stevenson (2006) contend that policy is about the power to determine what is done, or not done, whereas Odhav (2009: 33) holds that 'although a radical shift in policy content and direction has occurred from apartheid to post-apartheid, numerous problems continued within the higher education sector and in policy processes, specifically in their implementation within and between institutions'. However, the policy weaknesses do exist in various areas, such as funding, redress and capacity building, both for historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) and for students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

That is, despite Beckmann and Prinsloo's (2009) claim that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa protects the fundamental rights of everyone in our country. In this regard, Palmer and De Klerk's (2012:61) apt comment arguing that 'despite the transformation of South African society, its education institutions in particular remain sites where powerlessness is rife and social communication discourses reinforce the notion of perpetual disempowerment'. This has already been endorsed by Ramphele (2009) and Bloch (2009) in Chapter 4 where they say that the marginalised remain marginalised.

Governments, nevertheless, do increasingly preach a minimalist role for the state in education, with a greater reliance on market mechanisms, compromising the process of social justice practices as was argued in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, governments do generate policies that would expedite the skilling process, even though educational systems around the world have become larger and more complex, and governments have therefore, according to Rizvi and Lingard (2010), looked to market solutions. This approach of governments probably stems from a perception that market solutions are less wastefulness. Jansen and Taylor's (2003) opinion, in this regard, refers to the difficulties of ensuring that centrally driven policies meet their goals and do not veer off into unintended consequences. This perception is supported by Mashau and Mutshaeni's (2014) claim that policy implementation is very difficult to achieve, and that most policies will either take a long time getting off the ground or not be implemented at all. Nevertheless, one may question the constitutionality of these educational policies.

However, the justice in policy implementation in general is a different matter, since the policies' directives actually instil best practice regimes within educational management at educational institutions. It may therefore seem plausible to argue that the unintended consequences, as argued in Section 4.3.3, cannot be directed at the purpose or design of the said policies, but rather at their inefficient implementation. This means that arguments that have been directed in educational discourses against the utilisation of market-directed policies (as argued in Section 4.3), should actually be aimed at their poor implementation by educational practitioners and management. It therefore seems that the poor academic results should rather be blamed for the lack of implementation skills by educational practitioners, such as educators, in addition to the unavailability of the necessary resources at TVET colleges.

Nevertheless, one may otherwise attribute some of the poor educational outcomes to intense political government pressure on educators in the state's quest to demonstrate its educational successes. For example, as I pointed out in Section 1.1, Young (2001) argued that the ANC government was burdened by reformist commitments and therefore needed to deliver on their 1994 election promises, because its successes would be reflected in how well it (the state) could actually deliver on its targeted education goals. One can probably conclude that the focus of education policies was not arbitrarily selected, but was determined by the logic of government's decision to address social challenges, such as youth unemployment, inequality and poverty.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter engaged an aspect that Napier (2005:79) referred to as the 'most daunting challenge to reform' namely transforming South African education via the use of market-directed policies. Unwin (2003:11) called it the most enormous economic and social challenge. Although the post-1994 government managed to transform a fragmented, racially divided education system to what has become a democratic and unified education system at least, it is still left with operational problems and challenges. What remains problematic is whether this education system will be able to respond positively in producing the desired academic outcomes, as directed and/or coerced through policies to the benefit of all students equally at TVET colleges. Therefore, the question 'do educational market-directed policy[s] generally benefit South African students positively or not?' has great relevance to all South Africans.

Due to apartheid's legacy of educational inequality, Jansen and Taylor (2003) contend that the government is actually justified in its generation of a formidable architecture of policies to govern education (Jansen & Taylor, 2003:9). Having said that, the government's intention of addressing the nation's huge youth unemployment (inclusive of the NEET) youths' challenge

would therefore become a more realistic prospect in the long term. Policy developments have therefore been aimed at democratising the education system, in overcoming unfair discrimination, expanding access to education and training opportunities, and improving the quality of education (RSA, 2013). In fact, the Further Education and Training Policy of 2006 and the Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act (No. 3 of 2012) and the Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 (SDA) have played crucial roles in this regard.

In the final chapter which follows, Chapter 6, it will be established whether the expectations that were placed on TVET colleges to deliver on their mandate by improving the operational levels of efficiency and social justice practices at all TVET colleges are justified. Such a conclusion will indeed show whether neoliberal-based policies can be said to work when actions (section 5.3) based on them actually result in achieving the desired educational outcomes at TVET colleges.

Chapter 6

Tensions between market-oriented policies and the promotion of efficiency and social justice practices at TVET colleges

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the nature of government's educational market-directed policies and the role that they were supposed to play in transforming educational practices, particularly at TVET colleges, in an attempt to respond to the main research question. In this final chapter, I will therefore have to establish whether these policies have actually been successful in realising the desired goals that were set for TVET colleges. These goals are, according to the Government Gazette (RSA, 2008), that TVET colleges have been mandated to equip students with the necessary knowledge (strong theoretical foundation), practical skills and applied vocational and occupational competence for employment in particular sectors of the economy. Furthermore, TVET colleges should also have provided students with the necessary attributes required for employment.

This means that the actual achievements of the colleges and/or their failures in achieving their target of efficiency and social justice goals, will therefore serve as the measure of their accomplishments. In this regard, I refer to my argument in section 1.1, where Arndt (1929:12) holds that 'the characteristic pragmatic viewpoint is that things [policies & procedures] must be judged by their outcome - what works is right [in achieving their targets]'. However, as I also argued in section 5.3, that Srivastava and Thomson (2009:73) hold that 'to review processes that not only assess the success and/or failure of the policy or procedure, also encapsulate the successes or failures of the implementation of these policies'. In this regard, I refer to Ngcwangu's (2014:151) claims that:

At the end of apartheid, there was a real expectation that the death of a racist, fragmented, incoherent, yet planned education and training system together with its policies and practices – the manufactured bureaucracies spawned to give effects to the intentions of apartheid ideologues and political leaders and its deleterious [injurious] outcomes – would be terminated for the last time.

In assessing the validity of this statement, I shall bring together the main themes (or thoughts) of the previous chapters, with regard to the tensions and findings that have been raised with regard to how discourses of social justice and efficiency levels at TVET colleges have shaped practices, in addition to the relationship between the two concepts, as is reflected in the sub-questions.

For example, Powell (2013) contends that the ANC-led government had to face a trade-off between economic efficiency and social equity (section 1.1), which could be perceived to be mutually exclusive goals, meaning that the achievement of the two goals cannot be achieved simultaneously, or that these goals are in competition with one another. Motala (2007:23), however, reminds us that ‘equalising education provision and opportunity in a deeply divided society [like South Africa], is a complex challenge’. In this regard, Kendall and Wickham (2006:4) refer to the ‘problem’, whereby social critique (of government policies) inevitably becomes moral critique, because the state is seen to have failed in achieving its goals for the public (educational) good.

However, the ETDP SETA report (2012:22) holds that the National Planning Commission’s (2011) review of the education system reports that ‘getting a detailed picture of post-school provision is difficult because ... no central database is available publicly’. In fact, Sheppard and Sheppard (2012:63) contend that DHET (RSA, 2010) concurs that empirical data are presently available not adequate to plan appropriately, to improve the retention and throughput rates, because reliable data for the TVET sector is not (always) available. However, one can in certain cases, from the available reliable, even though dated data, surmise how policy influences actually shape or structure educational processes at TVET colleges.

6.2 The effect of policy on TVET colleges

Powell (2012a) claims that the expectation that South Africa’s public TVET colleges are to respond to the skills needs of the South African economy by providing disadvantaged communities access to high quality and relevant education and training, is to become a reality. However, it has also been alleged that the implementation of education policy initiative was inadequate, in that it lacked practical feasibility. For example, the implementation of OBE was fraught with challenges (Section 5.2) and the policies themselves were ill conceived. One may indeed argue that the said policies may have been too optimistic to be feasible.

The previous statement must be seen from the perspective which, according to Powell (2012a:6), is regarded as a core component of the national development strategy, to produce ‘a high quality education and training [that] is an essential route in providing the required skills and attitudes for students’ employability’. In doing so, TVET colleges may have created great expectations that such institutions will be the panacea for skilling the nation’s work force. This viewpoint is probably justifiable, considering the strong view held by government,

to which I referred in section 5.1, that the TVET colleges can allegedly play an important role in economic development and poverty reduction.

It is this perception of TVET colleges' educational capabilities that questions first, their efficiencies, with reduced waste in the execution of their programmes, and second, whether their actions are actually effective in achieving previously set goals. However, Biesta and Burbules (2003) inform us that Dewey argues that the point of doing educational research is not only to find out what might be possible or achievable but also to deal with the question of whether what is possible and achievable is desirable [from a policy perspective]. I shall therefore have to explore available statistical data that were presented in official reports (section 6.1) on TVET colleges' performance in their pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness practices. In this regard, Nicholson (2013:58) reminds us that 'an inquiry's success depends on how well it works – that is, whether or not its fruits – conclusions, judgements, solutions – produce satisfactory experiences'.

6.2.1 Applying principles of efficiency at TVET colleges

Yin and Wang (n.d.: 39) posit that 'it is widely accepted that [government's] spending on education should be regarded as a productive investment'. In having said that, Leveille (2006) holds that colleges and universities had to become more concerned about growth and diversity as they are increasingly being held accountable for the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational enterprise. This observation is confirmed by the ETDP report (2012) arguing that efficiently run colleges are a continuing challenge that has been highlighted several times. This may also mean that it relates to an on-going process in seeking continuous improvement in educational practices via improvements made in its throughput rates.

Chapman (2002:47) however, notes that 'increasing pressure for greater efficiency is never-ending, because each accomplishment will be followed by a renewed call for an even greater efficiency'. For example, I shall be exploring the production of TVET output, which is commonly referred to as students' passes and throughput or completion rates. As I said in Section 3.3, Sheppard & Sheppard (2012:94) describe the throughput rate, for example of the NC(V), as the percentage of students who entered this programme and successfully completed it in the minimum time of three years, whereas, the graduation rate of, say the N1–N6 programmes, refers to the percentage of graduates produced in a particular year as a percentage of the enrolments in that particular year. In this regard, the data were captured in the Colleges Audit Report of 2010 and the updated ETDP SETA report (2013/14). Indeed, these two publications provide, among others, relatively recent statistics on TVET colleges' performances. For example, Cosser, Kraak and Winnaar (2011:46) argue that 'when all is said and done, colleges are inevitably judged on the quality of their student outputs.'

In this regard, the findings of the TVET colleges' audit report show that the throughput rates for the NC(V) and NATED programmes leave much to be desired (Branson *et al.*, 2015:46). This viewpoint is tied to Sheppard and Sheppard's (2012:96) claim that 'the South African post-secondary education system [feeder system of most TVET college students] is also highly inefficient'. As a result, thereof, the students from that secondary education system are poorly prepared to cope with the demands of post-secondary education programmes and higher education in particular. Consequently, such circumstances have probably led to the poor results that are now reflected by the TVET colleges' high failure rates, high drop-out rates and low graduation rates. Such a viewpoint echoes education minister Naledi Pandor's (2006) claim that 'the poor quality of public education in South Africa would threaten future growth if not corrected' (cited in Thompson, 2006:9).

Sheppard and Sheppard (2012:96) suggested that the efficiency of the system needs to be improved to ensure that more students can be successful by obtaining their certificates annually. These arguments relate to the data reflected in Table 6.1, showing the exceptionally poor results that were achieved in the NATED or 'N' programmes (also called Report 191) throughput rates.

Table 6.1: Mean throughput rates, 'N' programmes, 2007-2009, TVET colleges (shown in %)

	Business Studies	Engineering	Art and Music	Utilities	Educare and Social Service
N1	33	16	*	*	*
N2	15	19	19	17	*
N3	28	24	54	31	*
N4	47	31	43	33	39
N5	45	30	40	45	46
N6	47	24	33	36	62

Source: HSRC (2011): FET College Audit Report (2011:68)

* These mean throughput rates could not be calculated because colleges did not provide complete data on pass rates.

For example, almost all the mean throughput percentages that are reflected are well below 50%, and of the 27 reported programmes, 16 (or almost 60% of programmes) report a throughput rate of less than 40%.

This is the percentage of students who entered a programme and successfully completed it in the minimum time required for the programme. In fact, only the Art and Music programme results, that is, for the N3 programme at 54% and the N6 Educare and Social Service programme at 62% throughput rates, can be regarded as satisfactory. Notably, those TVET

colleges also offered the National Senior Certificate (NSC) by allowing school dropouts a second opportunity to complete twelve years of schooling at TVET colleges. However, their enrolments have always been low (Cosser *et al.*, 2011:74).

In fact, recent enrolment numbers (bearing in mind the unavailability of reliable figures for 2012 and 2013) in the NSC are exceedingly low, indicating that those who have not completed high school do not make use of these TVET college facilities. In this regard, Branson *et al.* (2015) claim that the majority of young people in South Africa do not enrol in post-school education. In fact, only 8% of youth aged 15-24 are in any type of post-school (university or college) education. This line of thinking may therefore justify Branson *et al.*'s (2015:42) note that 'the majority of young people in South African do not enrol in post-school education'. Such a situation is therefore contrary to Branson *et al.*'s (2015) claim that 'an effective post-schooling education and training system can provide a range of potential pathways that [would] enable youth to make the transition from mainstream schooling to the workforce'.

However, in Table 6.2 below, the results tend to improve as students move from NC(V) Level 2 to NC(V) Level 4, where a majority of subject 'mean' scores are above 50%.

Table 6.2: Mean throughput rates for NC(V) programmes, 2007-2009, TVET colleges.

Fields	Office administration	Marketing	Finance, Economics and Accounting	Management	Building	Engineering and Related Design
Passed NC(V) L2	40	45	35	29	26	29
Passed NC(V) L3	45	48	55	37	22	30
Passed NC(V) L4	56	55	53	60	24	22

Source: HSRC (2011): Profiles and Efficiency Indicators questionnaires; Audit Report (2010:72)

One may probably attribute this trend to the fact that Levels 3 and 4 students have already passed Level 2 and may probably have matured or got used to college challenges and have therefore become more determined to complete the programme(s). However, critical fields such as Engineering and Building are characterised by a very poor throughput rate, with students in Engineering scoring a low 29% for NCV 2; 30% for NCV 3; and 22% for NCV 4.

These results for the Building and Engineering programmes reflect deteriorating pass rates in the higher levels, which will therefore require that an empirical study be undertaken to determine and explain these declining rate trends. For example, Cosser *et al.* (2011) contend that the national average throughput rate for the N-programmes is 47%, for NCV

programmes it is 30%, while for other programmes it is 66%. Expressed differently, for every 100 students who enrolled for N-programmes, 53 either failed or dropped out, and for every 100 students who enrolled for NC(V) programmes, a massive 70 students failed or dropped out. These poor student performances could probably also be attributed to what Sheppard and Sheppard (2012) earlier claimed that the South African secondary education system is highly inefficient and therefore the poorly prepared students were forced to cope with the high demands of post-secondary education programmes.

This conclusion probably relates to the poor learner performances that were recorded for the lower grades' Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Monitoring Learning Achievements (MLA) scores achieved (section 3.3.3). I shall therefore argue that the high failure results, high drop-out rates and low graduation rates at TVET colleges are not unexpected. However, they just underline the fact that the money invested in the Basic Education programmes are not reflected in these scores achieved. In fact, one may interpret such performances as being that of poorly prepared learners. Jansen and Taylor (2003:23), however, posit that 'poor graduation and retention rates, and high dropout rates, represent a high wastage of resources' as reflected in Table 6.3. In fact, Table 6.3 shows how, statistically, the performances of registered male and female at TVET colleges vary.

Table 6. 3: Number of students in public TVET Colleges who registered, wrote examinations and completed qualification according to category and gender, in 2013 (adapted).

Qualification Category	Female			Male			Total registered	Total wrote	Total finished	Percentage %
	Number registered	Number wrote	Number finished	Number registered	Number wrote	Number finished				
Report 191 (N3)	14816	14601	6516	27212	26600	11867	42028	41201	18383	43.7
Report 191 (N6)	24715	23974	7784	19417	18867	7484	44132	42841	15268	34.6
NC(V) Level 4	14044	12807	5168	10376	9123	2946	24420	21930	8114	33.2
Total	53575	51382	19468	57005	54590	22297	110580	105972	41765	37.8

Source: National Examinations Database 2013 (Statistics on Post-School Education & Training in South Africa).

For example, only 43.7% of the total number of 42 028 students registered for N3 actually completed this qualification, whereas, for the N6 qualification, only 34.6% actually completed this qualification. The situation for the NC(V) L4 reflected that only 33.2% completed their studies. This meant that of the N3 students, 56.3% did not complete this qualification; for the N6 registered students, 65.4% did not complete their qualification; and for the NC(V) 4 students, 66.8% failed to complete. Clearly these dismal completion figures represent wastage of the nation's human resources.

These performance figures are indeed a problematic issue, in the light of the Department of Education's (RSA, 2001b:21) note that 'a student dropout rate of 20% is calculated to cost R1.3 billion in government subsidies'. Moreover, the real costs are said to be immeasurable, according to the Department, which is explained in the following extract:

These [lost to inefficiencies] funds would go a long way not only in financing the expansion of the higher education system, but also in providing the much-needed funds for redressing the inequities of the past. Moreover, the cost to those who drop out, in terms of the moral and psychological damage associated with failure, is incalculable (Department of Education) (RSA, 2001b:21).

This extract captures what Jansen and Taylor (2003:23) argue namely that, not only is efficiency low, so is the effectiveness of the schooling system. In this regard, Johns *et al.* (1983:29) concur, by arguing that 'educational expenditures affect the economy most favourably when they are determined by human wants for education.' This line of thinking probably explains why, according to Gamble (2003), governments and policy-makers in all parts of the world are increasingly viewing education and training as a central feature of long-term, global economic competitiveness. Marginson (1993:22), however, claims that education can only improve the potential of the labour force when fundamental learning occurs. By merely increasing the level of formal credentials, certification of the workforce does not in itself signify a better educated workforce. In other words, certification does not necessarily mean that skills have been acquired to apply in the work situation.

However, Philpott (2003:145), a chief economist, argues that the fault lies with the way businesses use their employees. In fact, Philpott claims that 'there is no guarantee that increasing the supply and level of qualifications will translate into higher productivity. In fact, it may just turn out that skilled people simply end up performing tasks for which they are overqualified'. Hence Mlatsheni's (2012:36) advice, on the one hand, that close attention needs to be paid to education and training policies in order to address this problem, whereas Akoojee and McGrath (2009) contend that King *et al.* (2007), on the other hand, urge us to be cautious about assumptions that a rediscovery of vocational education and training is magically going to deliver development. This has not happened in South Africa and will probably not happen elsewhere. We rather need to be cautious and modest about what skills can do for development; moreover, the fault may lie, according to Philpott (2003), with the way businesses use their employees.

In summary, I argue that the TVET college system should become more efficient in the execution of the learning and training programmes if more students are to be successful in obtaining their certificates annually. For example, with regard to the graduation achievements, the ETDP Seta's (2012) findings reflect that the percentages of N4–N6 students that successfully completed their studies for the years 2007 to 2009 were 39,2%,

41.0% and 40.4% respectively, which are relatively low rates of completion and are indicative of an inefficient system. These results are not encouraging figures, and these performances probably point to the amount of work that still has to be done at TVET colleges. I therefore suggest that improvement of these poor performance results should be regarded as a priority by the colleges' managements.

As stated previously, although a throughput rate is a narrow indicator of efficiency, it still provides an indication of how efficient a college is in terms of student performance, which is a key responsibility of colleges. Since government spends huge amounts of public money to get mainly our youth through education and training programmes, their successes as graduates of such programmes may be regarded as money well spent by government. Therefore, despite all these negatives that were reported on, one has to remember that training at TVET colleges provides an alternative channel through which, say, disadvantaged individuals can acquire the skills needed to increase their productivity and improve their employment prospects (RSA: 2011). However, it is actually the effectiveness of TVET college education and training, in terms of job preparedness, that should be our concern, because that will influence their productivity.

6.2.2 Applying principles of effectiveness at TVET colleges

In section 3.3.4, I argued that the effectiveness of an education system relates to the success in achieving long-term desired outcomes of the education process at TVET colleges. In this regard, the World Bank's (1980:32) interpretation of 'outcomes' is relevant, since it relates, in a sense, to the external effects of output – that is, the ability of students to be socially and economically productive. On the one hand, I am referring to the extent to which education satisfies work force and employment needs (Yin & Wang, 2004: 41), whereas the Government Gazette (RSA, 1997a: 14), on the other hand, notes that if the education system does the right things in terms of a given framework of expectations, that is, to increase youth employability and productivity, one can regard it as being effective.

This viewpoint is graphically illustrated by Chapman's (2002:21) flow diagram in section 3.3.2, which presents a broad representation of the education process. However, the model provided by Gewer (2010:11), as represented by Figure 6.1, provides a more detailed version of the education process of depicting college effectiveness (below). In this case, students' demographic features (antecedent measures) are listed in terms of race, gender and socio-economic status. It is important to note that Figure 6.1 provides a general framework for assessing college effectiveness. However, given the scope of this study, I cannot address all the facets of the process individually. I will, however, broadly discuss certain aspects of the process, by focusing primarily on the following: input measures, student support, resourcing, output, increased placement and links to industry.

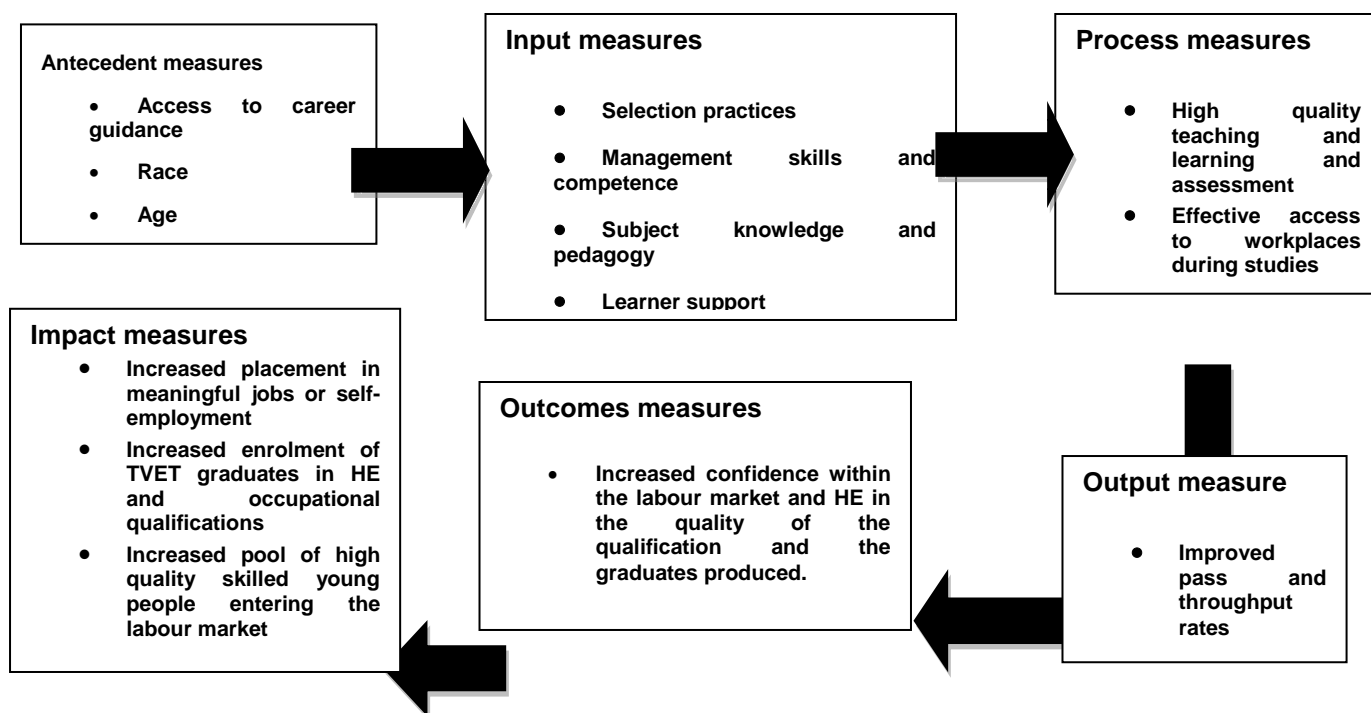


Figure 6.1: A framework for assessing college effectiveness. Source: Gewer (2010:11)

With regard to resourcing, Gewer (2010:20) holds that despite the Recapitalisation Fund that was set up by the state during the 2007 to 2009 period, 'it is clear that the level of resourcing across college campuses remains highly unequal'. For example, the ETDP SETA report (2012) notes that the resources allocated to the TVET colleges' sub-sector have a bearing on both its size and shape. This allocation of public funds was part of the Government's efforts to improve the capacity, to create adequate capabilities within the sub-sector, in order to address the youth unemployment challenges that are facing the country. On this issue, Gewer (2010:26) posits that better quality inputs (graduates), from the basic education system are required in the long term, in order to produce meaningful graduate participation in industry.

However, Branson *et al.* (2015: 42) contend that 'South Africa's youth are not equipped with the necessary skills to successfully find employment'. It is therefore argued that the improvement of the schooling system is critical. This viewpoint is in line with Branson *et al.*'s (2015) claim, in section 6.2.1, that an effective post-schooling education and training system can provide a range of pathways for youth to make the transition from mainstream schooling to the world-of-work. In this regard, I argue that student support plays a meaningful role. For example, Papier (2012:2) posits that 'there are still too many students who are vague about their choice of programme or the demands it will make on them', whereas Allais (2012:11) notes that 'the intention was that the education system produced learners who were competent in the workplace, that access was provided to those previously excluded and that their informal learning was recognized'.

Clearly, TVET colleges have not actually reached this objective, in view of statements made earlier in this section that the post-secondary education system is highly inefficient, because the quality of instruction at TVET colleges apparently correlates with the quality of the output. It would therefore be more beneficial to students and education in general at TVET colleges, if more qualified, industrially (vocationally) experienced educators are recruited to the skilling of students (output). This is, however, not always possible, since the TVET colleges have to meet very specific equity targets, as stated in section 6.2.1; even though, as I argued in section 4.3.3, a study by Mgijima and Morobe (2012) confirmed that the percentage of lecturers teaching on the NC(V) programme without a teaching qualification was 37%, according to the ETDP SETA report (2012:26), which does not augur well for quality teaching.

In fact, the same could also be said of lecturers that are recruited from TVET colleges who are described as top students who had attained the N6 qualification. Even though these lecturers may be regarded as the best graduates from their respective TVET colleges, I argue that graduates with neither workplace experiences nor any formal pedagogical training, could result in classroom disciplinary situations and even poor teaching practices. This suggestion justifies Gewer's (2010:15) claim that 'college lecturers require a balance of technical and pedagogical qualifications as well as [related] industrial experience'. Following my earlier discussion in section 6.2.1, student support, both academic and psychosocial, has emerged as a major cost in TVET college delivery.

Indeed, these recorded student performance statistics may even have resulted in creating the allegedly poor student employment perception. In fact, students' performance statistics should therefore send a signal to South Africa's youth that they must aim at acquiring the highest education level possible in order to improve their employment chances. For example, Coetzee (2013:5) reported in the Cape Times that 'the unemployment rate among people with a post-matric [Higher Education] qualification is far lower when compared to those with a Grade 12 or lower qualification'. This viewpoint is shared by Wedekind (2013:6), who states that 'whilst the graduate unemployment trend is worrying, the problem for those without higher education qualifications is far greater'. Indeed, in the 2011 Census, argue Branson *et al.* (2015: 42), 'youth aged 25-29 with college qualifications are 36% more likely to be employed'. Similarly, a college-qualified youth earns 60% more than someone with a school-leaving matriculation certificate or Grade 12, and those with a university qualification earn nearly 1.5 times more.

A likely explanation for these discrepancies between post-matriculation, matriculation and employment figures is that post-matric qualifications with their more in-depth or lengthier exposure to advanced training and education make a difference to economic employability. However, TVET colleges also have poor throughput rates and are not trusted by industry to

deliver skilled workers, argues Wedekind (2013:4). In addition, many programmes at colleges have limited linkages to industry and, understandably, there is little recruitment done by some industries from this sector (Wedekind, 2013:4). This perception may even suggest that industries have little confidence in the ability of TVET college graduates, hence the low employment figures.

The preceding argument links to Mayer *et al.*'s (2011:27) claim that 'the formal education system has failed to fulfil its purpose of equipping young people with the relevant educational and skills competencies required to access available job opportunities in the formal and informal economies.' A conclusion may probably be drawn from studies that were conducted, by the Post-apartheid Labour Market Surveys (Bhorat *et al.*, 2014), in an examination of the growth rates by education and occupation categories. According to Bhorat *et al.*'s (2014:7) analysis, the evidence for professions requiring highly trained and highly educated (graduate) workers, has shown significant increases by 7.5% in skilled occupations for degree-holders, whereas the result for certificate-holders (TVET & private colleges) is less obvious and is concentrated across medium- and high-skilled occupations (Bhorat *et al.*, 2014).

Sadly, a negative growth rate of -3.3% was recorded for employment opportunities for workers with no education, confirming that demand for them is extremely limited and declining. This unemployment situation is most probably being associated with the 15-24 age group in Table 6.4, since this group includes poorly skilled students, therefore justifying Horn's (2006:115) claim that unemployment is without doubt the major economic problem as can be clearly seen in Table 6.4.

Table 6. 4: Unemployment rate by age and percentage.

Age Cohort	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
15-24	55.9	51.8	50.2	46.6	51.3
25-34	34.1	29.8	28.5	26.2	29.1
35-44	21.0	18.2	18.2	16.6	17.8
45-54	16.1	11.9	12.4	9.3	12.4
55-65	10.0	7.2	6.9	6.5	7.3

Source: Development Indicators based on Labour Force Survey. (Sept. 2010 figures)

The 15-24 age groups have recorded the highest unemployment rates from 2002 (55.9%) to 2010 (51.3%), even though the rate has actually decreased from 55.9% to 51.3%. With regard to the 15-24 age cohort, Cloete and Butler-Adam (2012) note that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released a survey of South Africa which revealed that it had the worst rate of unemployment for the youth between the ages of 15 and 24 among 36 countries surveyed in 2008. Furthermore, this perception is further compounded by racial disparities: 53.4% of young black 15 – 24 year-olds were unemployed

by the end of 2009, which was three times worse than the 14.5% unemployment rate of young white South Africans. Significantly, the ETDP SETA's report (2012:20) notes that the statistics reveal that two thirds of all unemployed are below the age of 35, with the highest numbers being among the black youth.

Another rather disturbing statistic, according to Powell (2007), shows that over 30% of Learnership graduates remained unemployed, in some cases up to a full year after graduation. This statistic is very disturbing, since TVET college graduates who are already familiar with the world of work through a Learnership programme, remain unemployed for up to a year. This situation bodes ill for the nation's hope that TVET colleges should be the panacea for skilling the nation's youth. One can possibly surmise that this phenomenon could possibly be attributed to the level of confidence that captains of industry have in TVET college education and training. In fact, Borat *et al.* (2014:27) contend that '[TVET] Certificate-holders also saw fairly high levels of unemployment'. This situation may even be attributed to an oversupply of this cohort in the market, and the varying occupational absorption at different skill levels is indicative of the wavering quality of the TVET system.

In fact, Borat *et al.* (2014: vii) share this viewpoint in his abstract that 'further education and training (TVET) colleges and other institutions, do not productively contribute to economic growth' This is probably attributed first, to the limited number of work (job) opportunities available, and second, to the significant number of young people who do not have the skills required to access these opportunities. This line of thinking would probably explain the concerns that are directed at the content of the NC(V) which allegedly does not accurately align with the skills requirements in the industries concerned (Gewe, 2010). Ironically, the NC(V) happens to be the new curriculum system at TVET colleges, and yet it is lacking in the execution of the practical component which will impact negatively on the work preparedness of their students. Minister Nzimande (2009) nevertheless remains positive by arguing that the NC(V) programmes can assist young people to acquire the skills needed to compete for jobs in a 21st century labour market (formal sector).

In summary, I have thus far established that TVET colleges struggle to be efficient and effective which create a problematic issue for government to deal with, especially if they are to respond to the needs of the large numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) that still have to be accommodated in skills programmes at colleges. This exacerbates an already dire social situation when the colleges' own dropouts and failures add to an existing NEET youth pool. Therefore, colleges urgently have to become efficient and effective, even in the short term, by improving the TVET colleges pass and throughput rates, which is only one part of what they should do. The other part described by Mlatsheni (2012) which urgently needs attention, is that there is a problem with South Africa's youth work-readiness upon entering the labour market.

6.2.3 Economic growth and TVET colleges

Bhorat *et al.* (2014:1) contend that education has long been viewed as a determinant of long-term economic growth and well-being. This viewpoint is supported by Walker (2012:385), who holds that Keely (2007) claims that ‘education is instrumentally a means to economic growth because better educated workers are assumed to be more productive in generating wealth’. However, individuals are thought to consciously choose to invest in themselves (advanced education) to improve their economic returns, and to rationally optimise their own behaviour (Walker, 2012). These scholars’ arguments point to one of the central debates which my study addresses: is education primarily a means to increase the nation’s economic productivity or to develop well-rounded democratic citizens?

As I argued in section 5.3.3, Badat (2009) holds that education must cultivate the knowledge, competencies and skills that enable graduates to contribute to real economic growth⁷, since such growth can facilitate initiatives geared towards greater social equality and social development. This understanding would probably explain the government’s huge expenditure in financing educational practices. Bhorat *et al.* (2014:1) identify three channels by means of which education can influence growth as:

- (i) Education increases the human capital inherent in the labour force, increasing labour productivity which probably can lead to higher growth levels of output.
- (ii) Education adds to the innovative capacity of technology to produce new products and processes, and therefore growth.
- (iii) Education can facilitate the diffusion and transmission of information needed to understand and process new ideas and successfully implement new technologies devised by others.

Karmel (1962), an economist, claims that education has direct beneficial effects on the production and the rate of economic growth. Therefore, the perception exists that education pays for itself by future production, just as any ordinary investment in capital equipment does. Such an understanding would probably explain McCord’s (2003:36) claim that ‘more rapid economic growth would be required to absorb the growing South African labour [youth] force’. According to Knight’s (2001:3) note, a 6% goal (real growth) is seen as a necessary

⁷ Real growth is being referred to as changes in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which are the changes in the real volume of goods and services that are nationally produced at constant prices in a specified period (Van den Bogaerde, 1972:19-20)

rate to reduce unemployment, which has not been achieved during the period from 2001 to 2013. In Table 6.5 the reader is introduced to real economic growth as it is recorded in South Africa from the period 2001 to 2013.

Table 6.5: Real GDP growth in South Africa, 2001-2013.

	Real economic growth rates						
Country	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
South Africa	2.6	3.0	1.9	3.5	4.9	5.0	5.1
Country	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
South Africa	3.1	-1.8	2.8	3.1	2.5 (est.)	2.0 (est.)	

Source: CIA World Fact book – Mundi index, 2014 (South Africa's real growth rates).

According to McCord (2003) the GDP growth trends in South Africa have, since the 1970s, been falling from an average of 6% during the 1960s, to 3% in the 1970s, 2% in the 1980s, and 1.3% in the 1990s. Table 6.5 however, also shows that the most notable positive fluctuations occurred from approximately 3.0 (2002) to 5.1 (2007), thereafter a notable negative -1.8 growth rate was recorded in 2009. It is from these low growth rate fluctuations that one can conclude that South Africa's growth rate has been sluggish for the past decade. Even though South Africa managed to maintain positive growth, it did not meet the required sustainable 6% growth rate to reduce unemployment, in particularly youth unemployment. Powell (2011), however, cautions that history has shown that an increase in GDP – and particularly in the absence of associated social and political programmes – does not itself alleviate poverty or improve human lives.

Even though government has invested heavily on transforming the vocational education system, and although much has been achieved, there are still numerous challenges that have to be addressed particularly in the area of skills development and unemployment among our youth (ETDP SETA report, 2012). This viewpoint links with Sheppard and Sheppard's (2012) claim that future growth scenarios show that a combination of accelerated growth as well as efficiency improvements are needed to expand the TVET sector's contribution to the desired levels of access and skills development for economic growth. However, one also needs to remember that TVET colleges' students have to be developed with marketable skills to be regarded as employable.

In summary, I have established that TVET colleges struggle to be efficient and effective, and that their low (graduate) outputs are a national challenge, considering that colleges will probably also have to respond to the needs of the large numbers of NEETs not to exacerbate this situation. That is, especially true, considering that TVET colleges have not (actually) generated the desirable outcome. A possible reason could be attributed to be, as Bhorat *et al.* (2014) note, the low quality of secondary schooling. In addition, we find more people with

higher levels of education being employed to do tasks that could have been done by someone with a lower education.

Nevertheless, an important positive of college performance includes the substantial improvements in the number of young people and adults enrolled in TVET colleges from 2010 onwards. However, the Government Gazette (RSA, 2008) reminds us that planned increases in students' intake in the TVET college (a key consideration), must be accompanied by improved retention, throughput and work placement rates of the students in order to realise the return on public investment. However, Norman-Major (2011) holds that without clear and immediate results (short term), it would be difficult to build support (social) programmes that are designed to reduce, for example, inequity, and argues that they are economical, effective, or efficient. In the following section I will explore how the available data explain the effectiveness, efficiency or economy of social programmes.

6.3 Social justice practices at TVET colleges

Education has long been recognised as providing a route out of poverty and as a way of promoting equality of opportunity. In this regard, the White Paper for Post-school education and training (RSA, 2013) holds that:

The achievement of greater social justice is closely dependent on equitable access by all sections of the population to quality education. Just as importantly, widespread and good quality education and training will allow more rapid economic, social and cultural development for society as a whole (RSA, 2013:5).

However, Lefebver and Vietorisz (2007) posit that the concentration on the efficient pursuit of one particular goal, for example economic growth, may actually work against the implementation of some other, perhaps equally important goals, such as equity and social sustainability. Social efficiency, therefore, makes sense only when it applies to the social, economic, political and cultural system as a whole.

In section 4.3, I discussed the role that policies have played in promoting social justice practices in education provision in South Africa, by drawing on Akoojee and McGrath's (2004:26) claim that 'the initial policy position of the ANC was designed with issues of redress and equity in mind rather than the imperatives of global efficiency and integration'. That discussion was focused primarily on policies that were aimed at achieving equity, equality and quality (social) goals at colleges. Brown (1989), however, notes that these goals become incompatible if any one of them is pursued without adequate recognition of the need to achieve the other objectives in reasonable and politically acceptable degrees. However, the White Paper (RSA, 2013) holds that education will not guarantee economic growth, but

without the (desired) economic growth, it will not be possible to achieve all the goals simultaneously.

As I argued in section 5.2.2, 'the new national government also had limited policy resources to draw on to articulate a clear and focused strategy for effecting social justice' (Badat & Sayed, 2014:128). This line of thinking probably explains why the government is currently positioning the TVET colleges to be at the cutting edge of the skills revolution programme to address the critical problem of youth unemployment in South Africa (ETDP SETA report, 2012). Indeed, this thinking means that the extent to which TVET colleges have or are able to meet very specific targets relate to access and success rates, in addition to what I argued in my concluding remark in section 6.2.3, namely that there must be improved retention, throughput and work placement rates to realise the return on public investment.

Indeed, these suggestions emphasise the fact that enrolments at TVET colleges must increase and, more importantly, students must successfully complete their programmes (ETDP SETA report, 2012). In this regard, the TVET College Act 16 of 2006 is quite clear on this issue, since it prescribes that TVET colleges should 'enable students to acquire knowledge, practical skills, and applied vocational and occupational competence, in order to enter employment, a vocation, occupation or trade; or higher education' (ETDP SETA report, 2012:13). In other words, youths need to be first, equipped to enter higher education to access an academic qualification, or to enter the workplace for further training towards specialised occupations; second, to offer school leavers, as well as employed and unemployed people, the theoretical foundations for an occupational qualification that leads to a formally recognised trade (Gewe, 2010).

Therefore, Segooba (2012) argues that prospective students and their parents should know that programmes at TVET colleges are meant not only for those leaving matric, but also for all youth categorised as NEETs, because programmes at TVET colleges are also meant to refresh training and improve skills. In this regard, Griffiths (2003:122) claims to regard social justice as a verb (section 4.2), in other words it involves action results, since 'as we try to act on our principles of justice, we are faced with the gap between our theories and our practices'. This thinking is shared by Griffiths' interpretation of Unterhalter's (2003:123) claim that 'we need to adjudicate between our actions so that we can say this action is more just than that'. For example, Badat and Sayed (2014:145) posit that 'implementing a social justice vision in education entails establishing new institutions, reconfiguring old ones, and changing institutional cultures and practices'. In other words, South Africans have to be educated and trained, equipment and learning materials have to be provided, and, more importantly, funding has to be voted, allocated, and accounted for.

All these advances have to be effectively stitched together by people with the necessary knowledge, expertise, skills and values consistent with those espoused in the national Constitution, argue Badat and Sayed (2014). However, Hursh (2009:162) holds that 'we need to examine the dangers of neoliberal reforms to democratic institutions (TVET colleges) and to reinstate deliberative forms of democracy that support individual (students') rights beyond the right to choose'. Therefore, this study will explore whether market-directed policies actually promote the improvements in all the core components of social justice practices, that is, equality, equity, quality and redress, since these intentions should be weighed against what Badat and Sayed (2014:141) claim to be 'arguably the biggest challenge in advancing social justice in South Africa [which] is making adequate state funding available for equity; otherwise social justice and development in and through education will be undermined by financial constraints'.

This financial challenge is, at the time of writing, probably the most daunting concern confronting education practices, particularly at higher education institutions, since these concerns pertain to student access and more specifically student fees, which are crucial matters that the educational authorities will urgently have to address. However, in view of the sluggish economic growth rates (Table 6.5) of the past decade, they will most definitely influence the government's ability to actually finance crucial educational and other social programmes such as pursuing equality and equity programmes in public utilities. This viewpoint is confirmed by Rasool and Mahembe's (2014) statement that the purpose of TVET is an area of contestation with strong economic arguments that make a case for TVET to serve wholly economic ends. A case is therefore made as to whether these urgent social goals should receive a greater financial priority than the investment in programmes that steer the adherence to efficiency practices in all state organs.

In this case, Norman-Major's (2011: 249) argument has relevance by asking 'if public policies reflect social values, then how do they also reflect trade-offs among competing values [or goals]?' I am referring here to Rasool and Mahembe's (2014) claim that 'TVET colleges currently sit firmly within the economic development paradigm', meaning that when TVET colleges attempt to address poverty and inequality, they do so within the neoliberal perspective; hence, McGrath's (1993) question 'can society balance economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity?'. Or, when differently phrased, whether the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness are mutually exclusive and incompatible with social goals such as equity, equality and redress, since they tend to become incompatible (or mutually exclusive) if any one of them is pursued without adequate recognition of the need to achieve the other objectives in reasonable and politically acceptable degrees, argues McGrath (1993). In having said that, McGrath (1993) admits that the literature does not provide a definitive

answer to the question of whether equity and efficiency in educational finance are exclusive or compatible.

To provide greater clarity on this matter, I refer to Mandela's viewpoint in Chapter 4, cited by Gebremedhin and Joshi (2016), that education should serve the well-being of the nation and its people by first, promoting the economic advancement through imparting training and skills; and second, through the fostering of social justice. In this case, Mandela's reference to the economy shows, I argue, his desire to first establish a sound economic position from which other social programmes should be considered. Therefore, I hold, even though Norman-Major (2011) rightfully argues that society should balance goals, there are times when it is acceptable to value one over the other goal. Hence, from an educational perspective, I shall argue that our chief focus in education will be determined by the availability of adequate resources, in particular financial resources, to either initiate or sustain desired educational programmes.

Although the Government Gazette (RSA, 2008:31) regards the funding framework as underpinning the principles of access, redress, equity and representivity, DHET describes funding as a driver of access, quality, equity and redress. However, the current economic (recessionary) challenges that South Africa is experiencing, I argue, necessitate that an educational focus for TVET colleges should primarily be towards the improvement of the nation's economic position; that is, by ensuring the delivery of adequately skilled graduates for the labour market. Thereafter, a stronger South African economy would make it easier to launch or sustain desired educational programmes to pursue, for example, greater equality and/or equity at TVET colleges. In fact, a stronger economy would generate more employment opportunities to absorb a greater number of TVET college graduates into meaningful jobs.

6.3.1 Equality practices at TVET colleges

As I discussed in Chapter 4, I intend interpreting the concept equality mainly in terms of equality of opportunity (regardless of race, gender or age) to a quality education. For example, Gamble (2003:22) suggests that social equality (or the lack thereof) can be dealt with by a massive increase in access to education and training. For example, the government (RSA, 2013) expects that TVET colleges will become the cornerstone of the country's skills development system, hence a major effort will have to be made to increase its enrolments. In this regard, one of DHET's (RSA, 2015:22) 'central strategic objectives for the TVET college sector is the need to increase access to, and improve, success in programmes that lead to intermediate and high-level learning'.

Lupton (2005:589) shares Gamble's (2003) viewpoint, but for a different reason, namely that social justice in education demands, at the very least, that all students have access to the

same quality of educational processes, even if their outcomes turn out to be unequal. In this regard, one of DHET's (RSA, 2015:22) central strategic objectives for the TVET college sector is 'the need to increase access to, and improve success in programmes that lead to intermediate and high-level learning'. Colleges should however, be stabilised and the quality of education improved before they are expanded (RSA, 2013:13), which I think seems a plausible strategy. For example, there would be dire consequences in the quality of the education TVET students receive, if massive enrolment increases occur whilst these institutions are still struggling to improve the quality of their programmes.

In response to the previous thought that colleges should be stabilised, Hall (2012:5) notes that 'the meaning of equality of opportunity is easy to assume but far more difficult to apply'. In this regard, inequality can be experienced through a lack of access to other tangible resources as well as to intangible qualities of life whereas Badat and Sayed (2014:128) hold that 'equality of treatment and opportunity is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for eliminating systemic historical and structural educational inequalities that black South Africans experience as a result of the segregated (underdeveloped and unequal) institutions that were reserved for them under apartheid'. In this regard, I wish to focus attention on certain demographic changes that were experienced at TVET colleges, for example, between the male and female student populations as can be seen in the following Table 6.6.

As can be seen in the Table 6.6 the 133,095 female enrolments versus 188,211 for males shows a substantial difference of 55,116 or 41%. The data in Table 6.6 also shows that female students were well represented in 2002 for the following courses: Art-Music (53%), Business Studies (68%), Utility Studies and General (69%).

Table 6.6: Headcounts of students by vocational fields by gender, 2002

Fields	Females	Males	Totals	%FM	%M
Art-Music	1605	1449	3054	53%	47%
Business Studies	79 152	37 685	116 837	68%	32%
Engineering	28 772	135 232	164 004	18%	82%
General	9 117	8 394	17 511	52%	48%
Utility Studies	11 695	5 340	17 035	69%	31%
National total	133 095	188 211	321 306	41%	59%

Source: Powell and Hall (2002) (Adjusted for programmes).

As expected, the Engineering figure for males was high at 82%, compared to the 18% for female students. This skewed gender distribution in Business Studies and in Engineering (perceived to be a male interest) probably reflects the social conditioning that links these occupations to specific genders. To challenge these socially conditioned beliefs is part of the aim of equity. However, the demographically representative picture, that is, in terms of the male and female student population, has changed appreciably as is reflected in the more

recent data that can be seen in Table 6.7 hereafter. However, Table 6.7 provides a basic profile of students that is a headcount of students in the then FET (now TVET) college sector by province, race, age and gender.

Table 6.7: Total headcount enrolment, TVET colleges, 2010, by province, race and gender.

Province	Total no. Whites	White % of enrolments	Total no. African enrolments	African % of enrolments	Total no. Coloured enrolments	Coloured % of enrolments	Total no. Indian enrolments	Indian % of enrolments	Other	Other % of enrolments	Total	% female by province
EC	916	3	27488	88	2850	9	89	0	3	0	31346	50.9
FS	570	2	22517	96	297	1	14	0	12	0	23410	50.7
G	3219	4	72959	86	1009	1	374	0	7707	9	85268	47.1
KZN	2460	4	56401	90	652	1	3174	5	12	0	62700	50.7
L	282	1	32892	99	26	0	4	0	18	0	33222	52.2
M	1418	7	17646	91	158	1	141	1	5	0	19368	52.1
NW	804	5	16646	94	223	1	30	0	44	0	17747	41.7
NC	127	2	3930	61	1956	30	12	0	441	7	6466	51.8
WC	5905	12	16153	34	24373	51	165	0	775	2	47371	53.1
TOTAL	15701	5	266632	82	31544	10	4003	1	9018	3	326898	50.1

Source: DHET (2011). Note: The category 'other' denotes unclassified data.

Provinces: EC = Eastern Cape; FS = Free State; G = Gauteng; KZN = Kwa-Zulu Natal;

L = Limpopo; M = Mpumalanga; NW = North West; NC = Northern Cape; WC = Western Cape.

On the positive side, gender parity was at least established across eight of the nine provinces. This reflects a major shift from 2002 (a detailed breakdown of data unavailable), when female enrolments were only 41% of the total as is reflected in Table 6.6. Overall, the 2011 figures for African students are generally higher, varying between 61% for Northern Cape to 99% for Limpopo, whereas the figures for African students in the Western Cape are 34% and that of the coloured group 51%, which is an indication that the black population is not in the majority in that province.

Other notable findings, that were included in the FET College Audit Report (Cosser *et al.*, 2011), inform us that substantial, positive gains have been made in transforming the TVET college enrolments in terms of racial representivity. This is evident from the data of 1991, when African enrolments comprised a mere 18% of total enrolments, and yet, the 2010 figures show African enrolments stood at 82%, which reflects a significant growth in their numbers at colleges, whereas white enrolments have actually dropped considerably, from 50 907 in 1991 or 67% of enrolments to only 15 701 or 5% in 2010 (Cosser *et al.*, 2011:56).

Another positive contribution of note is the gender issue, as is depicted in Table 6.7. If one looks at the totals across the provinces, the national racial demographic breakdown of

Whites (5%), Africans (82%) Coloureds (10%), Indians (1%), and Others (3%) is revealed (based on the 2010 statistics). However, as the data depicted in Table 6.7 show, the demographic positions have noticeably changed for 2010 compared to the situation for 2002. Indeed, the 2002 national gender composition of 41% was for female students compared to that of males at 59%, whereas the 2010 figures for female students, in particular, show an increase of 9,1% (total 50.1). In fact, the figures for male students had actually decreased by 1.1% (total 49.9%).

With regard to the position of staff at TVET colleges, Table 6.8 clearly shows that males are still better represented compared to that of females; however, the gender representation is very close.

Table 6.8: FET college staff according to gender

Category	Male	Female
Management	59%	41%
Lecturing	54%	46%
Support	42%	58%

Source: DHET (as reported in the 2011 Mini Sector Skills Plan) (ETDP SETA, 2012:25)

Even though the data still indicate that the ratios in management positions were 59% versus 41% and 54% versus 46% for lecturing, females are more dominant in the support staff category, which is 42% versus 58%; thus, producing an overall ratio of males to females employed at TVET colleges as a very close 52:48 in the employment situation.

One can therefore surmise that the social transformation of this formerly skewed racially structured vocational training system at TVET colleges has been a dramatic development. In this regard, Cosser *et al.* (2011) hold that the phenomenon of the white workers' shrinkage could probably be attributed to a demographic correction. Whereas the white artisan tradition was built up during the boom years of racial capitalism (the 1950s and 1960s), it has now been phased out, by constituting only 5% of total enrolments (Cosser *et al.*, 2011). However, McGrath (1993) holds that equality could only be assured when enough money was available to provide comparable programmes to students with different needs.

The previous line of thinking relates to Rasool and Mahembe's (2014) argument that, given the unemployment, inequality and poverty challenges facing the country, the South African TVET system needs to be strengthened in order to provide students access to high quality technical vocational education for all, that is, youth and adults. In the following section, I will explore the validity of Akoojee and McGrath's (2004:41) claim that 'the clear intentions of the new educational settlement to promote equity and redress within a quality system have been

undermined by responses via policy directives [favouring efficiency and accountability practices] to globalisation that privileged the power of the market over social concerns’.

6.3.2 Equity practices at TVET colleges

Badat and Sayed (2014) contend that equity is essential for achieving substantive equality. In fact, equity interventions allegedly work best when they are adequately financed, well targeted, robustly monitored and evaluated, according to Badat and Sayed (2014). According to the Department of Labour’s (RSA, 2001c:51) interpretation, the term ‘equity’ also means ‘fairness’. This perception links to Lewis and Motala’s (2004:122) claim that ‘in broad terms, equity was to be achieved through the redistribution of human, physical and resource inputs’, whereas Moja (2005) holds that an important indicator of improved equity is the percentage of enrolment; the other is participation rates. Figure 6.9, below represents projected student enrolments for the period 2007 to 2014, following the projections of the National Plan.

Table 6.9: Target for expansion of enrolments up to 2014

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
National Enrolments	25 000	60 000	120 000	177 000	256 000	371 000	538 000	800 000

Source: The National Plan 2008

Figure 6.9 represents a projection of significant enrolment growth rates of between 43% and 46% per annum (ETDP SETA Report, 2012:9). In addition, the National Plan (RSA, 2008) also proposed an enrolment process that allegedly was to be managed as follows: ‘at least between 70% to 80% of each college’s student enrolment capacity should be dedicated to the ministerial approved TVET qualifications, IVET⁸ (initial vocational education and training)’. Moreover, between 20% and 30% of each college’s student headcount enrolment capacity should be dedicated to CVET⁹ (continuing vocational education and training) which in the South African context may focus on flexible offerings, for example, adult students, formal adult education and training programmes, higher education and occupational programmes, and so forth.

⁸ The Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) refers to VET that is offered through the formal school or college system to prepare students for higher education programmes, entrepreneurship or employment. The curricula for IVET are broadly specified in order to lay the foundations for further learning or for several related occupations (RSA, 2008:15).

⁹ Continuing Vocational Education and Training (CVET) refers to vocational programmes that are offered to the youth and adults to enhance their knowledge and skills closely related to the workplace and the job functions of CVET participants (RSA, 2008:15).

This process is in line with Akoojee's (2002) note that student access to higher education institutions has been associated with the recent massification of higher education, since there is an undeniable national need at South African institutions to enable the participation and success of students previously disadvantaged by the apartheid system. However, student enrolments in public TVET colleges have shown dramatic increases over the years. There was a perception that the targets as stipulated in the National Plan have been achieved. For example, for 2007 the Plan shows an estimation of 25 000 compared to the actual recorded figure of 322 093 for 2011; the Plan's estimation was 256 000 compared to the actual number of 427 423 (ETDP report, 2012). Consider Table 6.10, which represents the aggregate enrolments in the TVET college sector between 2007 and 2011.

Table 6.10: Enrolment figures from 2007-2011.

YEAR	TOTAL NATED (N) ENROLMENTS	TOTAL NC(V) ENROLMENTS	OTHER ENROLMENTS	TOTAL ENROLLED
2007	245 230	31 414	45 449	322 093
2008	178 086	81 742	41 250	301 078
2009	175 999	166 469	42 638	385 106
2010	169 803	122 257	40 520	332 580
2011	221 872	120 044	85 507	427 423

Source: DHET (2012); HSRC 2011

Overall, the data indicate that there were notable fluctuations, especially in the enrolment in NC(V) and NATED programmes. Nevertheless, the NATED programmes have had the largest enrolments compared to the other programmes for each of the years during the 2007-2011 period. Furthermore, the data in Table 6.10 also depict a drop in the enrolments in the NATED programmes, that is, from 245 230 in 2007, to 178 086 in 2008, to 175 999 in 2009 and to 169 803 in 2010, but then increased dramatically in 2011 to 221 872. Cosser (2012:2) explains this phenomenon by pointing out that in 2006 the former Department of Education decided to phase out the N (NATED) programmes in favour of the NC(V) programmes, followed by an about-turn to proceed again with the NATED programmes, hence the increase to 221 872 for 2011.

This would also explain the shift from an N programme focus to that of an NC(V) programme focus, when enrolments increased dramatically in the NC(V) programme enrolments to 166 469 in 2009, thereafter dropping to 122 257 in 2010 and 120 044 in 2011. Cosser (2012b) also notes, in particular, that the NC(V) programme, which was set to become the college sector's flagship programme with funding that was redirected towards this goal, also experienced enrolment decreases. It is therefore surprising that, after the initial massive enrolment increases, that is, from 31 414 in 2007 to 166 469 in 2009, and then to 122 257 in

2010, it was followed by another drop to 120 044 in 2011 as indicated in Table 6.10. It is these fluctuations in NC(V) enrolments that have prompted Gewer (2010) to refer to concerns in industry as to whether or not the supply will meet the demand for NC(V) graduates. The immediate reaction of industry (employers) was to pressure DHET to bring back the NATED programmes, which was contrary to policy, because the NC(V) programmes were the priority focus (Gewer, 2010).

Interesting though, is Brown's (1989) claim that the general principle of equity may be declining as a goal of public policy. His argument, I argue, may not be applicable to the South African situation where the challenge to government need to launch intervention programmes is still high, to improve social justice practices at educational institutions. For example, Sheppard and Sheppard (2012) remind us of the proposed vision of TVET college enrolments needing to be expanded to address the large numbers of unemployed but educated youths that were not studying further. This thinking links to McGrath's (1993:1) reasoning that 'equity is a social term rather than an economic one and is defined in relation to inequities or inequalities in [access] or the distribution of wealth or resources, and the adjustments, which are required to allow for equitable redistribution'. However, equity interventions work best when they are adequately financed, well-targeted, and robustly monitored and evaluated. This is, according to McGrath's (1993:2) claim that 'equality could only be assured when enough money was provided or available to the TVET Colleges to provide comparable programmes to students'.

In this regard, the concept equity is compatible with the concept of efficiency, since in this case, according to Brown's (1989) thinking, to become compatible, a balance is struck between maximising efficiency with maximising the individual and social benefits such as the distribution of financial resources of education for students. In fact, I argued in section 4.2.2 that the government assisted students via the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to continue their studies at TVET colleges (Department of Education, 2008). In this regard, Minister Nzimande confirmed, in his 2013 Budget Vote speech, that the government's commitment in aid through the NSFAS was 187 497 TVET College students, which exceeded their (DHET) projection of 180 826 students for that year. In this regard, Nzimande (2013:1) holds that 'in order to cater for the expansion in student enrolments in TVET Colleges, we [DHET] have set aside R6.3 billion over the 2013 Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period, beginning with R1.988 billion in 2013 and culminating in R2.2 billion in 2015'.

This measure, argues Nzimande (2013), will ensure greater access to education and training opportunities for 702 430 poor and academically capable young people over the MTEF. Such financial challenges in higher education confirms, according to Badat and Sayed (2014), that there is a crucial need to increase the NSFAS budget in order that all eligible students are

funded fully and there is real equality of access and opportunity. Despite such arrangements, the NSFAS has come under pressure, as more poor students seek tertiary education, even though a projected spending of about R12 billion for 2017/2018 and an increase up from R9.2bn for 2015/2016 was earmarked. These measures, argue Makholwa (2015:3), are expected 'to support an increase from 972 000 to just over 1million in university enrolments, and from 800 000 to just under 1,2million enrolments at technical and vocational education & training colleges'. Nevertheless, these increases in the scheme's allocations, according to Makholwa (2015), are still not enough to accommodate the swelling numbers of needy students demanding funding for higher education.

In this regard, Akoojee (2002) holds that Cubberley's (1905) thinking is relevant in that theoretically all students of the state are equally important and are therefore entitled to the same advantages. However, such huge student increases (massification) would financially create huge challenges that will most definitely compromise Rawls's (1971) second principle which suggests, according to Taylor *et al.* (1997), that the state has a special responsibility to create policy initiatives and programmes that are directed towards removing barriers that prevent equity, access and participation, since the state will not be in a strong economic (financial) position to sustain programmes, to rectify former unfair practices via positive discrimination which would be in line with Rawls's (1971) second principle of difference. This thinking links to Dowling's (1999) claim, as cited in Norris (2001:221), that a policy of equity and redress in South Africa requires resolute intervention at the different levels of working and social life to rectify the consequences of past discrimination. Such interventions may actually lead to favouring some groups over others, but this is in line with Rawls's second Principle of Difference (1971) in promoting social justice. That is, the greatest educational benefit goes to the least-advantaged or most deprived members of society.

Such a policy of equity and redress was required in South Africa to enable people who were historically disadvantaged to compete on a par with their privileged counterparts. On this issue, Bergeron and Martin posit (2015:1) that 'making college more affordable is certainly essential. However, in order to meet short- and long-term economic needs, the higher education system must be [made] easier to navigate, as well as more transparent'. In response, the Gazette (RSA, 2008:31) notes that the funding formula focuses on the historically disadvantaged by requiring colleges to incorporate race, gender and special needs in their plans. According to the funding framework, the state will first, subsidise 80% of the programme costs; second, college fees will be 20% of the programme costs; and third, fees will be capped at levels that are consistent with public funding and the cost of delivery of the service. However, despite the progress made in ensuring access, there are challenges, among others, in terms of quality, physical infrastructure, funding and affordability arising out of a combination of historical backlogs, argue Rasool and Mahembe (2014).

In summary, Badat and Sayed (2014:141) contend that without well-funded and effectively targeted equity measures, equality of opportunity for students from working-class and impoverished rural communities would probably continue to be severely compromised. Despite such a perception, McGrath (1993) holds that the general principle of equity may also be declining as a goal of public policy. In fact, educational equity for example, is either being downgraded or put on hold at both the national and provincial levels because of competition from other sources such as health and social services. Nevertheless, Mashau and Mutshaeni's (2014) note that Schiefelbein (1983) holds that sources of funding and methods of funding allocations have important implications for the outcomes of a quality educational system.

6.3.3 Quality practices at TVET colleges

Arcaro (1995:56) holds that quality is the most important topic of discussion in education today. Furthermore, Arcaro continues that 'quality is creating an environment where educators, parents, government officials, community representatives, and business leaders work together to provide students (at colleges) with the resources they need to meet current and future academic, business and societal challenges'. Indeed, such social arrangements, I argue, are required, if one should seriously regard the government's interpretation of the notion of quality, meaning that quality education relates primarily to outcomes, which are expressed as the rates of passes and throughput of students at colleges.

In fact, Ramphela (2014:18) holds that 'poor education leads to high dropout rates and high school graduates who are not ready for jobs or higher education' will remain the reality the government and its educational authorities will need to address. This reality is also true of TVET college graduates. Akoojee and McGrath (2004:42) however posit that 'it is our contention that the neoliberal thrust of the macro-economic policy under GEAR has seriously constrained and even undermined the agenda of the new government in South Africa to make quality education a right for all.' Moreover, ten years on, South African education (still) remains deeply uneven in quality and access remains far from equitable, according to Akoojee and McGrath (2004). This line of thinking probably explains why the negative perceptions about the quality and value of TVET qualifications have been impeding the progress of the TVET sub-sector (ETDP SETA report, 2012:7).

Indeed, Mashau and Mutshaeni (2014) therefore claim that Niewehuis (1996) argues that the education authorities wrestle with the question of quality in education while trying to improve accessibility, equality and equity. In this regard, the ETDP SETA Report (2012:22) notes that 'it is emphasised in a number of research studies that the public TVET colleges face serious challenges of quality, expansion and lack of diversification of programmes offered'. As Mashau and Mutshaeni (2014) reason, quality education enables people to develop all of

their attributes and skills to achieve their potential as human beings and members of society. Hence, Hanushek and Wößmann's (2007) claim that research evidence suggests that the quality of education, as is measured by the knowledge that students gain, as depicted in tests of cognitive skills learned, is substantially more important for economic growth than the mere quantity of education.

This is a viewpoint the Government Gazette (RSA, 2008:38) shares that 'the design of programmes in which a wide range of skills requirements can be catered for is central to transforming TVET colleges into institutions of the 21st century'. Therefore, for educational investment into student learning in terms of time, effort and resources, all people involved in the education process have to have the right incentives that make them act in ways that advance students' performances, that is, according to Hanushek and Wößmann's (2007) reasoning. This is so, because quality education, argue Mashau and Mutshaeni (2014), provides the foundation for equity in society and is one of the most basic public services.

However, even though assessing the quality of teaching may remain a challenge, Henard and Leprince-Ringuet, (2008: 4) note that 'some quality initiatives aim to improve pedagogical methods while others address the global environment of student learning'. This line of thinking links to McGrath's (2010b) claim that Ramirez (2006), Smith (2008) and Tikly (2010), among others, argue that we know that improvement in educational quality and attainment are not simply about correct application of widely known and accepted technologies. However, these targets are inherently about more complex issues such as culture, teacher's status and authority, and organisational culture, which are all of significance. According to the White Paper (RSA, 2013:12), part of the process of ensuring that colleges become quality educational institutions will involve setting a benchmark for optimal functionality in order to determine the interventions needed in each institution.

Indeed, the White Paper (RSA, 2013) holds that the Quality Councils will assure that the quality of assessments and the new South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (SAIVCET) will fulfil a developmental, monitoring and evaluation role. Such a strategy will probably explain why the performances of TVET colleges, according to Cosser *et al.*'s (2011:46) findings, are judged on the quality of their student outputs, whereas Galabawa and Alphonse (2005) hold that Munishi's (2000) argument that the type of training that leads to quality outputs and outcomes will depend on a number of factors. These include factors such as educational levels of educators, educator-student ratio, infrastructure, and equipment/book-student ratio, among others, which will now briefly be discussed.

(i) Educational levels of educators

Akoojee *et al.* (2005:109) posit that 'colleges are also struggling to address other issues about quality, such as, the nature and quality of staff and their teaching which are important

factors in quality learning'. In fact, the Government Gazette (RSA, 2008:20) notes that 'in pursuit of flexibility and responsiveness, the FET Colleges Act of 2006 makes it the responsibility of public TVET colleges to employ the lecturers and support staff. Moreover, that 'the appropriate caliber of lecturers [needs to be] developed and recruited. The department must [also] develop a national lecturer development framework, which spells out the knowledge, skills and qualifications required to teach at a public TVET college', according to Akoojee *et al.* (2005:109).

In fact, the findings that are presented in the Umalusi Report (2011) confirm that quality education and training is linked to lecturers having appropriate qualifications at college sites (campuses). In fact, I shall argue that the teaching qualifications, in addition to the appropriate lived experiences of academic staff, play a crucial role in the execution of their duties. I shall also argue that the teaching qualifications, in addition to the appropriate lived experiences of academic staff, play a crucial role in the execution of their duties. Table 6.11 for example shows that a substantial number of staff do not hold a degree or higher diploma or the diploma level.

Table 6.11: Qualifications of academic staff, full-time and part-time, TVET colleges 2010

Province	Artisan	Higher Degree	1 st degree or higher Diploma	Diploma	Below Diploma	Total
Eastern Cape	72	80	289	144	114	699
Free State	33	48	236	144	54	515
Gauteng	56	213	581	504	322	1676
Kwazulu-Natal	40	71	179	443	301	1034
Limpopo	56	113	271	343	93	876
Mpumalanga	25	34	173	307	216	755
North West	14	48	132	142	95	431
Northern Cape	9	5	26	29	6	75
Western Cape	114	158	472	283	216	1243
Total	419	770	2359	2339	1417	7304

Source: Cosser *et al.* (2011:61)

The Table further depicts 1,417 or 19% of staff do not hold a degree or higher diploma educators in 2010, which is an insufficient basis for teaching at the post-school level. Educators who hold either a higher diploma or first degree total at 2,359 or 32.3%, whereas those with a higher degree are only 770 at 10,5%. At provincial level, only three provinces, namely Gauteng (1,676 or 22.9%), Kwazulu-Natal (1,034 or 14,2%) and Western Cape (1,243 or 17%), are well provided with academic staff in nearly all the qualification categories. However, the very low numbers of 419 or 5.7% of staff are qualified as artisans, in addition to 19.41% or 1,417 of staff that hold a qualification below that.

As I argued in section 4.3.3, that Mgijima and Morobe (2012) maintain that 37% of lecturers teaching on the NC(V) programme are without a teaching qualification, implying that 63% may be assumed to have a teaching qualification. Cosser *et al.* (2011:32) however, rightfully argue that 'qualification level is not the only measure of lecturer effectiveness. Staff experiences in industry and teaching experience in the college are equally important measures in determining lecturer qualification for the job'. In this regard, for example, the national profile reveals that 74% of lecturers in 2010 had three or more years' experience in industry and that 58% had three or more years' experience in college teaching (at their present college). Therefore, the appropriate calibre of lecturers that are recruited are people who should be well versed, as subject specialists, in the methodology of teaching the subject, coupled with appropriate work-related experience.

In this regard, Dewey (1938) emphasises that part of the effect of a good and educative experience is to prepare a person for richer further experiences. Jackson (2009), however, holds that linking knowledge to experience does not mean confining what we know to what we have ourselves seen or felt or heard. It is therefore right to claim that our knowledge defines the limits of what exists. In such cases, I argue that delivering quality education and training is a challenge. However, training is regarded as an imperative and lecturers at 355 sites visited indicated that they are in need of training (Umalusi, 2011:31). In this regard, a most disturbing statistic pertains to lecturers at 65% of the sites visited who indicated that they were not exposed to the workplace environment or to the relevant industry in general.

However, this lack of workplace exposure would probably hamper their awareness and/or access to the new technological development in their fields of teaching (Umalusi, 2011). In fact, it is implied that the NC(V) programme is primarily a qualification with a strong practical/vocational bias, thus strengthening the link between TVET colleges and the workplace should be considered seriously if quality teaching and training are to be provided to students (Umalusi, 2011). In section 4.3.3, I argued that a probable solution to this skilled-lecturer problem would be the use of a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) strategy (ETDP SETA, 2012).

(ii) Educator to student ratio

The Cosser *et al.* (2011) audit report holds that it is a truism that the smaller the class, the more individual attention students receive, the higher their academic performance should be. In other words, consideration of the lecturer-student ratio in colleges is therefore important. Galabawa and Alphonse (2005) note that although student-educator ratios fell in the United States of America over a 35-year period, the overall student performance has not improved, nor have United States of America students shown any improvement in international

achievement tests. Such arguments question the idea that the smaller the class, the more individual attention students receive and the higher their academic performance is.

I, however, counter-argue that a low lecturer-student ratio is an enabling factor of student performance, but is no guarantee thereof, so the lecturer-student ratio is a determining factor in terms of student performances. In 2002, the lecturer-student ratio in TVET colleges in South Africa was 1:20, whereas in 2010 the ratio was 1:32 (Powell & Hall, 2004). This means that class sizes have increased significantly over the decade to a ratio approximating the norm proposed for the schooling system, which is between 1:35 and 1:40. However, from a more recent statistics source on the matter, the ETDP SETA report (2012:28) depicts in Table 6.12 the number of lecturers and students in Engineering Studies. The data reflect a lecturer to student ratio of about 1:45. This is high, given the prescribed lecturer-student ratio for vocational subjects of 1:30.

Table 6. 12: Number of lecturers and students in Engineering Studies

Number of students		Number of lecturers	
2011	2012	2011	2012
22 252	23 100	500	509

Source: ETDP SETA report (2012:28)

However, the White Paper (RSA, 2013) cautions that (student) growth should not result in over-sized classes that compromise the quality of instruction and there should be enough lecturers to cover all the disciplinary areas required by the colleges. In this regard, Cuseo (2013) claims that class size and method are almost inextricably intertwined. Moreover, one would probably use the lecture method for large classes compared to the discussion method for small classes. However, such a discussion method, I think, will partly hinge on the sophistication of the lecturer's class management technique, inclusive of his use of people skills. Therefore, one may probably argue that the student-lecturer ratio may even determine the appropriateness of the teaching methods, and teaching methods are related to student performance.

(iii) Infrastructure and Resources

Former Minister of National Education Naledi Pandor argued, as reported in the Mail & Guardian (Pretorius, 2007), that the capacity of colleges to contribute to skills development had been given huge momentum by the government's R1.9-billion allocations for the TVET sector's recapitalisation (recap). Prior to this development, colleges had to endure financial constraints. However, with the R1.9 billion funding, improvement of the infrastructure for the actual delivery of vocational education programmes to address the skills needs of both the employed and unemployed youth, was possible. In this regard, the Government Gazette (RSA, 2008) holds that any consideration of expansion of TVET programmes delivery over a

10-year period must take into account the inflow and migration of the potential student population, including those in the 17-24 age range.

This consideration would, however, not only apply to infrastructural development, but also to the range and types of programmes which are offered at various urban and rural sites. As I argued in section 6.2.3, Gewer (2010:20) claims that due to insufficient data, the outcomes of recapitalisation cannot be confirmed. Nevertheless, a report in the *Mail & Guardian* (Pretorius, 2007) informs us that the physical conditions at TVET colleges have been radically upgraded to enable the creation of skills needed in South Africa. This development was surely needed if the aim of enrolling one million further education and training college students by 2014 was to be realised. This development would also enhance the ability of lecturers to manage classes successfully. On this issue, the White Paper (RSA, 2013) on post-school education and training holds that colleges must have the facilities and the required equipment to provide the type of education that is expected of them. In particular, they must have well-resourced workshops for providing the practical training demanded by their curricula.

This confirms that for TVET colleges to respond to the challenge that South Africa faces, that is, the skilling of unemployed youth (inclusive of the NEETs), they must have the capacity to do so. I am referring to the appropriate infrastructure that will be conducive to promoting the quality and efficiency of education processes. This relates to the reasoning of Henard and Leprince-Ringuet (2008:7) that '[i]f an institution wants its teaching to be of good quality, it must give concrete, tangible signs that teaching matters'. In this regard, for example, the findings of the Umalusi report (2011:56) on the quality assurance of examinations and assessment of NC(V) and NATED programmes have confirmed that moderators reported a marked improvement in the availability of resources for the implementation of internal assessment.

However, Perold (2012:184) claims that 'unless they [students] exit with adequate skills and knowledge, young people are unlikely to benefit from post-school education or training'. In this regard, Schwartzman (2013) holds that Ginsberg (2011) argues that few incoming college students have been (adequately) prepared for exercising critical discernment as consumers of education. Such situations are allegedly attributed to a lack in explicit guidance or background in what constitutes educational quality, since students may be uninformed, immature consumers whose preferences should not serve as the primary guide for educational practice.

6.3.4 Redress practices at TVET colleges

In Chapter 4, I argued that like 'quality', 'redress' is often used in a broad sense. Barnes (2005:210) notes that the meaning of the term 'redress' at any one time can range from

‘rectifying a wrong’ to ‘reparation’ to ‘restoring equality’ to ‘empowerment’. Like Barnes (2005:216), I interpret the notion of redress as entailing both equality and equity. Motala (2007:23), however, reminds us that ‘equalising education provision and opportunity in a deeply divided society is a complex and demanding challenge’. This thinking links to Badat and Sayed’s (2014:128) claim that ‘redress requires a state that has the political commitment to institute measures that favour, through positive discrimination, those who were and are disadvantaged’.

That said, I am reminded that the White Paper (RSA, 1997a) claims that in South Africa today, the challenge is to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order. That is, to meet pressing needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities. In this regard, TVET colleges were identified, on numerous occasions, as I argued in section 5.2, as a means by which the government intends not only to correct the influences of past injustices, but also to engage in redress practices to right the wrongs of the past (Badat and Sayed, 2014). Badat (2009), however, continues by arguing that Wolpe (1991) claims that the resources needed to redress the effects of an apartheid system in education and training are not immediately available, except in the very long term.

Akoojee (2008:226) therefore advises that claims for institutional redress must be balanced with the imperative of social redress for historically disadvantaged groups of people. Among these were students from historically disadvantaged groups, who were in large and increasing numbers entering institutions, and who should be assisted financially. This confirms that redress measures are especially critical for ensuring social advancement for individuals from socially disadvantaged and marginalised groups (Badat & Sayed, 2014). For example, the minister’s announcement during his 2012 Budget Vote speech relates:

To increase access into TVET colleges, especially for the youth from poor socio-economic backgrounds, the bursary allocation for TVET colleges increased from R300m in 2009 to R318m in 2010. In 2011, the allocation was increased fourfold to R1.235 billion and a further increase in 2012 to R1.7 billion.

The EDTP SETA report (2012:7) states that ‘with these resources at the disposal of the colleges, education for poor students becomes free. Such a commitment of government, as is reflected in the extract, supports the Gazette’s (RSA, 2008:31) suggestion that ‘the funding formula [should focus] on the historically disadvantaged by requiring colleges to incorporate in their plans race, gender and special needs’. Thus, according to the funding framework, first, the State will subsidise 80% of the programme costs, and second, college fees will be 20% of the programme costs. Third, fees will have to be capped at levels that are consistent with public funding and the cost of delivery of the service. Fourth, a TVET College bursary scheme will enable colleges, within the available bursary allocation, to award bursaries to deserving students who cannot pay all or part of the college fees (RSA, 2008). This strategy,

I argue, will enable a greater number of poor and deserving students to develop their true potential.

Another course of action that received ministerial approval was the suggestion that TVET colleges may offer higher education programmes, particularly at Levels 5 and 6 of the NQF, under the authority of a higher education institution. Such co-operation and partnership aimed at ensuring quality of provision will facilitate students' articulation into higher education qualifications, including skills transfer among lecturers in a particular subject or field (RSA, 2008). This suggestion has merit, especially where there is no higher education institution available in, for example, a rural locality. In such cases, should TVET colleges offer regionally relevant higher education programmes under the authority of a higher education institution of its choice, disadvantaged students will be provided with access to higher education.

In response, the White Paper (RSA, 2013) reported that Level 5 (Higher Certificate) programmes have been introduced in some colleges in partnership with universities, which has worked well in terms of developing and enhancing intermediate skills, which are in high demand (RSA, 2013). This development probably ties in with Allais' (2012) claim, on the one hand, that policy makers hope that education can solve unemployment and many other socio-economic problems through vocational education reform, but education cannot compensate for society or address all of society's needs. On the other hand, employers in industry may often have unrealistic expectations, particularly in terms of expecting educational programmes to produce completely 'workplace-ready' graduates who have good communication skills, can read and write well, can work in teams, take initiative and so on.

Akoojee (2002) therefore holds that equity and redress are important imperatives for a society attempting to transform. However, Dowling (1999:10) notes that 'a policy of equity and redress requires resolute intervention in the different levels of working and social life of this country to rectify the consequences of past discrimination'. However, Akoojee (2002) holds that Mabokela (1997) cautions us that concerns about efficiency appear to be consistent with the need to restrict access, while at the same time being inconsistent with the achievement of quality. In this regard, there is a need to ensure, according to Akoojee (2002), that access and quality do not exist in contradiction to one another and that the achievement of quality is to be achieved by increasing diversity and access. However, Akoojee (2002) also holds that Bergquist (1995) notes that access, and by implication quality, cannot be achieved without adequate resources.

6.3.5 Access to TVET colleges and the workplace

In this section, I explore issues with regard to access to TVET colleges. Thereafter I will engage with the access issues pertaining to the world of work; that is, that the essential

purpose of education and training is the preparation of young people for lives of meaningful work. Since we spend the majority of our adult lives as workers, the challenge is then to structure education and working conditions in ways conducive to individual growth (Hildreth, 2011:38). However, an important issue to remember is that, according to Akoojee (2002), quality and access issues cannot be separated if we are committed to transformation, since there is a need to ensure that access and quality do not exist in contradiction to one another and that the achievement of quality is to be achieved by increasing diversity and access.

Babson (2014:149), in particular, holds that research suggests two specific initiatives which can probably offer better learning and, by extension, better social outcomes for youths, including more and better employment for the South African population:

First, is improved implementation of current policy in additive multilingual education, and second, is the adoption of a vocational educational model that goes beyond the acquisition of modular “skills” and “qualifications” and focuses on the attainment of occupational competence and identity.

However, Babson (2014:149) does acknowledge that ‘the wheels of (social) justice grind slowly, because implementation of these [desired] initiatives in South Africa will be slowed passively by inertia and actively by ideological and political resistance’.

(i) Issues pertaining to access to TVET colleges

As I argued in section 6.1, TVET colleges are being regarded as a core component of the national development strategy, and that its enrolment figures must therefore be increasing. In this regard, Akoojee (2002) holds that student access to higher education institutions has been associated with the recent massification of higher education. This understanding ties in with Akoojee’s (2008:301) argument that TVET colleges in South Africa are expected to not only provide skills that respond to the economic development prerogatives of the country, but also to expand access by inclusion. For example, the idea was, according to the Government Gazette (RSA, 2008:12), to massify youth and adult participation in TVET college programmes to 1 000 000 by 2014.

However, Sheppard and Sheppard’s (2012:63) advise that ‘this [strategy] requires that resources be deployed in a targeted manner with sound evidence-based priorities’. However, to ensure that enrolments are actually increased, the White Paper (RSA, 2013) notes that admission will not be based solely on qualifications held by learners. In this regard, it is argued that the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) should be applied more widely, especially for young adults who wish to access programmes in colleges. Furthermore, Perold’s (2012) reminder highlights the fact that, without adequate and appropriate forms of financial assistance, young people living in poverty will continue to lack access to the opportunities needed for them to break out of chronic unemployment and poverty. TVET

colleges, in particular, should therefore position themselves to cope with rapid expansion, despite the TVET college sector being highly inefficient in terms of throughput, retention rates and low pass rates.

It is therefore important for TVET colleges to explore possible evidence of epistemological access practices at their colleges. To clarify the concept 'epistemological access', the concept refers to the assistance offered by faculty to students, which will enable them to adjust easily in managing the pressures of college course work. Indeed, failing to do so could probably result in students' failure and/or discontinuation of their studies. Morrow (2009) however, admits that epistemological access can, at best, only facilitate, but never guarantee complete success in mastering course work. I, however, doubt whether all students benefit equally from such opportunities at all TVET colleges (campuses).

Currently there is strong resistance to preparing students too early for a specific vocational pathway, argues Rault-Smith (2008). However, the need to supply skilled labour has driven the TVET colleges to become very selective about the subjects and courses that they offer and the students who may select particular courses.

(ii) Issues pertaining to access to employment

The government's policy interventions to date have sought to position colleges primarily to offer a sound general vocational qualification to a critical mass of school leavers in preparation for higher education or improving skills for an inclusive economic growth path, argues Gewer (2010). In this regard, Gewer (2010:29) holds that 'in practice, the aim for the NC(V) of bringing together theory and workplace experience is falling short as a result of difficulties in securing access to workplaces'. Mlatsheni (2012) concurs, by arguing that global evidence confirms that generally the higher the level of educational attainment of youth, the better their probability of finding employment.

This perception links to Mlatsheni's (2012:31) claim that 'the current generation of youth in South Africa have arguably the greatest opportunities of any past generation; however, they are also confronted by many challenges'. Indeed, once youth have left school, they face the challenge of labour-market entry, since failure in the labour market may be caused by premature entry and thus insufficient education and training. In fact, one may probably argue that youth unemployment also depends on the extent of employment availability, and how well or poorly the graduates' skills match the available jobs criteria. In this regard, Birkin (2012:38) rightfully argues in the *Mail & Guardian* that 'our economic situation forces a narrow focus on our training needs'.

Nevertheless, a scan of the South African educational, labour and social policy documents show a broader vision than one that solely focuses on economic demands:

A successful TVET system will provide diversified programmes offering knowledge, skills, attitudes and values South Africans require as individuals and citizens, as lifelong students and as economically productive members of society. It will provide the vital intermediate to higher-level skills and competencies the country needs to chart its own course in the global competitive world of the 21st century (RSA, 1998).

The extract reminds us that one of the goals of TVET colleges is to prepare students for a world of work that includes both employment and self-employment as possible options, according to Gamble (2003). In this regard, Sheppard and Sheppard (2012) argue that trainers from industry could also help shore up the teaching quotas in TVET colleges, which is an approach that could cement closer engagement between colleges and industry. Allegedly, in such a situation, there would be no need (or haste) for lecturers to re-qualify themselves.

However, both these educational goals happen at different (opposite) ends of the same continuum, as they are focused at the achievement of different educational outcomes. For example, first Rasool and Mahembe (2014) argue that in the New Growth Path (2011) and that National Development Plan (2012), the TVET college sector is predominantly about building a strong relationship between colleges and industry for quick absorption (of graduates) into the labour market. At this end of the (educational) continuum the focus is on providing students with professional and marketable skills, with an emphasis on employability. Horn (2006), however, holds that the South African education system has for many years failed to develop entrepreneurial skills and attitudes among students. It is these capabilities that will prepare TVET graduates well, if they intend to enter the labour market as self-employed.

In fact, pressure is also created at the other end of the continuum (spectrum), according to Soares *et al.* (2016), to continue to fulfil higher education's role in preparing students to think critically (soft skills). That is by developing such skills so that students will benefit in more advanced studies at a later stage of their lives. I, however, shall argue that the educational authorities, including employers, work towards creating a balance between the students' skills demand for the employment market and the general social skills. Therefore, I shall suggest that a more holistic approach be followed in education delivery that would be beneficial to the student's preparation for a societal contribution, and their preparation for the world-of-work. This would probably explain Gamble's (2003:22) call for closer links between formal education and training, and workplace practices.

However, as Stumpf *et al.* (2012) argue in section 5.3.4, 'where an FET college is found lacking the capacity to deliver the skills needed for the economy, the SETAs should invest in building such capacity'. In this regard, I draw on the Minister's foreword to the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) III, namely that:

- (i) SETAs must ensure that they are backed by employers and workers, and are acknowledged as credible and authoritative voices on skills.
- (ii) SETAs must create interventions and shape solutions that address skills need within their sectors.
- (iii) SETAs must become recognised experts in relation to the skills demand within their stakeholder group (ETDP SETA report, 2012:34).

It is therefore important to strengthen the ties between TVET colleges, business and industry, because such ties benefit both students and employers (Sengooba, 2012). However, with regard to learnerships, Perold (2012:187) contends that 'learnerships offered through the 23 SETAs are intended to offer an alternative pathway to training, even though enrolment patterns may be stratified'. This perception meant that the majority of African and coloured learners enrol in learnerships at low skill levels, while Indian and white learners tend to participate in learnerships at higher levels. Apparently, these racial disparities persist when trainees enter the workplace with a lower percentage of African graduates securing jobs upon completion (ETDP SETA report, 2012).

However, the SETA's involvement in the skilling process of workers and the unemployed is essentially to establish good relations between SETAs and TVET colleges since they may contribute towards the structuring of learning pathways for out-of-school youth. This includes linking those SETAs with accredited service providers (TVET colleges) to plan and implement Learnership programmes, as well as offering them second-chance opportunities for completing their NSC (2011:46). However, Ramphele (2014:18) claims in the Sunday Times that 'we [government] have chosen a complex system of skills training, the Sectoral Education and Training Authority System, that absorbs R10 billion from the 1% of payroll tax each year with very little impact on our skills crisis'. On a more negative note, claiming back the money [that was] spent on training is a bureaucratic nightmare and many companies and individuals have given up trying, argues Ramphele (2014).

Nevertheless, the government remains committed in its response, as is spelt out by Minister Nzimande's (2013:7) comment in the Budget Vote Speech:

One of our priorities is linking the education and training institutions and the labour market. This is because workplace training is generally effective if on-the-job training is combined with theoretical study, and also because practical experience during training increases a student's chances of finding employment.

However, despite government's commitment, as reflected in the extract, aggregate levels of enrolment in Learnership programmes remain low if compared to the scale of the skills crisis in South Africa (Cosser *et al.*, 2011:73). What I am implying is that students and employers are not maximally exploiting the opportunities which the Learnership programmes allegedly

provide. Powell *et al.* (2007) however show that over 30% of Learnership graduates remained unemployed, in some cases up to a full year after graduation. Even though current available data on this issue were difficult to obtain, the importance of the Learnership programme for skills development is without doubt as an opportunity for TVET college graduate to familiarise them with the world-of-work.

Therefore, Mayer *et al.* (2011:26) comment that ‘the value of learnerships is still highly questionable, as most learnerships are found at the lower end of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) where vocational education has traditionally not fared well’. For example, Mlatsheni (2012:39) posits that ‘learnerships are more suited to workers employed in the formal economy, whereas the most vulnerable youth are either unemployed or engaged in survivalist micro-enterprises’. This perception is noted by Allais (2012) and Kraak (2004) comments that the Learnership system has survived its bad publicity rather well over the past ten years as some of the HSRC 2008 survey results show.

To summarise, I share Mayer *et al.*’s (2011:27) concern about the ‘dysfunctionality’ of the education system, in particularly at the TVET college level. Due to the lack of alignment with the skills and capabilities required by the world of work, young men and women (graduates) exit the system without being employable. The other reason is the lack of confidence that employers show for the quality and job preparedness of TVET college graduates. Unless these fundamental issue are addressed, other programmes that aim to ‘fix’ the problem will have limited success (Mayer *et al.*, 2011:27).

Therefore, irrespective of the government’s commitment in terms of its policy directives or initiatives to pursue equity and redress targets at TVET colleges and/or establish quality education practices, much still has to be done, since the formal public education system has failed to fulfil its purpose of equipping young people with the relevant quality education, and skills competencies. With market-directed policies in its educational practices, the recorded successes, in the long term, may arguably be attributed to these policies. Therefore, this study will take the viewpoint proposed by Allais (2012) that more basic macro-economic and political changes must be made in the national educational system, particularly as to how it will enable students to adjust to the highly competitive demands made in the world-of-work. In this regard, I will suggest that the quality of secondary education graduates will have to improve, as I argued in section 3.3.

The government allegedly appears to lack the will, argue Badat and Sayed (2014), to act courageously and decisively in addressing graduate quality problems at the levels of policy, personnel and performance. Supporting such a viewpoint, is Gill Marcus’ (Badat & Sayed, 2014:145) noteworthy comment that ‘South Africa faces significant challenges that will require a coordinated and coherent range of policy responses’. In addition, she advises that

‘the government [needs] to be decisive, [and] act coherently’ and most importantly, that government ‘exhibit strong and focused leadership from the top’. This is especially significant in view of Akoojee and McGrath’s (2009:10) claim that ‘the South African public colleges presently look particularly fragile as the state has trammelled their capacity to be responsive, thus undermining their value in the eyes of employers’. I shall now respond to the main research questions that were formulated in section 1.4.

6.4 Engaging with the research question

Whether market-oriented policies have actually promoted efficient and effective social justice practices at TVET colleges has now been explored. The evidence produced shows that such a policy strategy has proved to be counter-productive. In other words, even with the best intentions, the policies may actually precipitate conflict situations where competing policy priorities may actually lead to undesirable educational outcomes. In the light of the arguments that were presented in this chapter, I can respond to the main research question:

- (i) Does the pursuit of efficiency targets at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges via market-oriented education policies actually promote the execution and/or the sustainability of social justice practices at these institutions?

The key word ‘promote’ in the question probably leads one to understand that a positive relationship exists between the implementation of market-oriented policy action and social justice practices at TVET colleges. In other words, the implementation of market-oriented education policies leads to the improvement of social justice practices at TVET colleges, which is clearly not the case in view of the evidence that has been produced. For example, Akoojee and McGrath (2004:42) claim that the neoliberal thrust of the macro-economic policy under GEAR has seriously constrained and even undermined the agenda of the new government in South Africa to make quality education a right for all.

Indeed, the ETDP SETA report (2012:22) argues that ‘it is emphasized in a number of research studies that the public TVET colleges face serious challenges of quality, expansion and lack of diversification of programmes offered’. In fact, ten years after 1994, democratic South African education still remained deeply uneven in quality, and access remained far from equitable, argued Akoojee and McGrath (2004). Such thinking ties in with Mlatsheni’s (2012:38) claim that ‘[TVET] colleges have a poor image with employers and therefore only a minority of their graduates, aggregated across all fields, finds employment. As I said in Chapter 3, the image of the TVET college system is poor in the eyes of many and therefore public confidence in the sector in terms of being an option to a university education, is regarded as very low (ETDP SETA, 2012).

This perception, I argue, is based on students' performances, especially in the NC(V) programmes which are generally poor, and the drop-out rate is high. This viewpoint would probably explain why the TVET summit of 2010 recommended that the NC(V) qualifications be reviewed. Such a development is significant, in view of Mayer *et al.*'s (2011:7) claim that 'an enormous demand is being made on the ability of the South African education and training machinery to develop appropriate skills and capacities in the current youth population'.

Mayer *et al.*'s (2011) statement, in particular, leads to an impression that the formal education system has failed to fulfil its purpose of equipping young people with the relevant educational and skills competencies required to succeed in qualifying for opportunities available in the job market. Thus, the dysfunctionality of the education system, alongside with its lack of alignment with the skills and capabilities required by the South African labour market and economic growth trajectory, is the fundamental reason why young men and women exit the system without being employable' (Mayer *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, unless this fundamental issue is addressed, other programmes that aim to "fix" the problem will have limited success.

As said in section 6.1, the ETDP SETA's report (2012:7) holds that colleges have to meet very specific targets which relate to access and success (pass & graduation) rates, that is, enrolments must therefore increase and more students must successfully complete their programmes. This is currently a problematic issue, especially the goal of having more (quality) students graduating from public TVET colleges (ETDP SETA, 2012:7), even though such an achievement is in line with the colleges' mandate to provide students with the necessary attributes required for employment, entry into a particular vocation, occupation or trade, as well as preparing students for entry into higher education (RSA, 2008).

These examples serve as a confirmation that the implementation of policy does not always guarantee the outcomes which the state expects. For example, Akoojee and McGrath (2004) hold that government's focus on fiscal discipline in education led to depressed spending on public educational programmes. Similarly, government's pursuit of increasing access of students at TVET colleges probably also led to what Samoff (2001) claims (in section 4.3.5) to be a decrease in education quality, efficiency, and educator and student satisfaction. The removal, by redeployment and packages offered, led to the removal of experienced educators at colleges as well as schools, through the coordinated educational policy of rationalisation and re-deployment of educators, as I argued in section 3.3.5.1, which impacted negatively, particularly on the quality of teaching at TVET colleges.

Indeed, it may come about that actual policy practices may undermine what they were designed to achieve. For example, in Section 5.3 I referred to the OBE as a strategy established at the time, at TVET colleges and schools, although it may have been an appropriate initiative to consider at the time, the benefits it (OBE) was supposed to produce in education were never realised. I will nevertheless argue that the Government's best intentions were in seeking efficiency in education delivery, especially in the wake of the wastage of precious resources in the execution of the education function at TVET colleges and schools. It might have been justified in doing so, because there is a basic belief that efficiency is supposed to be worthy goal because it is an approach to bring about improved processing and methods to produce improved overall academic results. This goal was of course not, in general, achieved at colleges; it therefore remains, for the present, a too optimistic educational goal for the TVET college sector.

And yet, there are still areas that achieve excellent results: among these are the majority of graduates in service occupations such as cookery, hairdressing and hospitality find employment, the reason being that the skills they acquire very closely match labour demand. Even though the increases in student volume at colleges may have put immeasurable strain on colleges' limited resources, it has also improved the equality and equity status between races and gender at TVET colleges. I'm referring to notable increases in female students in programmes which were previously regarded as a male preserve, for example, engineering studies. Other notable areas where policy produced improved performance results include:

- i. Minister Nzimande (2013:1) reported in his budget vote speech that the pass rate for colleges has increased dramatically in recent years, from 9% to 45% in 2012. However, we need to remember that pass rates in themselves are not guaranteed indicators of quality.
- ii. The increase in student funding has helped TVET college enrolment to increase by 90% between 2010 and 2012, from 345,566 to 657,690 students (Nzimande, 2013:1). That is, one of the core goals of the college sector, to increase the number of young people and adults, has been relatively successful, when compared to 2010 figures (Section 6.3.1).
- iii. The following developments remain relevant, according to the ETDP SETA's (2012) report, namely the TVET Summit's recommendation of 2010, that the NC(V) qualifications be reviewed, which is nearly completed. Furthermore, DHET, the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (QCTO) and Umalusi have been hard at work reviewing the content of some of the NATED programmes in order to update and modernise the content (ETDP SETA, 2012). With all these efforts, the intention is to improve the quality, breadth and relevance of education and training programmes offered by the TVET colleges (ETDP SETA, 2012).

In conclusion, I draw on Allan's (1997:114) argument that 'the means employed by a college in attaining its purpose should be judged in terms of its effectiveness in bringing about that realisation'. The weight of the evidence produced in the chapters clearly tends to lean more towards a "no" response. Indeed, the overwhelming arguments and evidence presented point to TVET colleges being regarded as weak institutions because they are struggling to fulfil their mandates; that is, despite the numerous interventions that have happened to support lecturer development (ETDP SETA, 2012:35). One can therefore surmise that the government's efficiency and social justice goals for TVET colleges have not been realised.

Although improvements with regard to the pass rates were mentioned by the minister in his 2013 Budget Vote Speech, such improvements have not been confirmed in official educational publications (ETDP SETA, 2012). In the light of the findings and/or evidence that were presented in previous sections, it would therefore be fair to argue that market-oriented policies that targeted efficiency practices at TVET colleges may have probably undermined the quality and effectiveness of education delivery at these institutions.

As I argued in section 1.1, that an idea could be said to work only when actions based upon it resulted in the predicted, educational academic, results, I therefore conclude that government's goal for TVET colleges was not actually realised. However, we are dealing here with a work-in-progress situation which may eventually, over the longer term, I think, deliver the desired results, that is, when our economic situation has substantially improved by delivering a sustainable positive growth rate of at least between 5% and 6%.

However, the important point to consider here, is the central concern of balancing the dual goals of improving the efficiency and social justice levels at TVET colleges by producing better quality graduate passes, especially for those students from previously disadvantaged communities, by equipping them with adequate work preparedness skills. In the following section, I shall explore the alleged consequences that may be related to the issues which the subsidiary research questions will raise.

- (ii) How do educational discourses that are aimed at achieving efficiency inform the practices of TVET colleges?

Akoojee, McGrath and Visser (2008) contend that TVET colleges in the post-apartheid educational situation had to face the reality in 1994 of a college sector that was unfit for promoting social and economic well-being. This justifies Wallace's (2009) argument that since 1994, after forty years of apartheid, South Africa was forced to transform an education system. Birnbaum (1988), however, cautioned that educational institutions are by nature

cumbersome bureaucracies that are slow, rigid and wasteful and must therefore be transformed into efficient and effective educational organisations.

This thinking links to Jansen's (2002a:44) response, that 'the adoption of GEAR was supposed to bring about improvements in the quality of education provision', especially for the poor students at TVET colleges, which is still an issue requiring attention. This perception therefore explains Kraak's (2004) claim that one of the most perverse inefficiencies in the entire education system occurs in the public TVET college system, which has therefore created the colleges' delivery problem. That is, when its required or expected of Grade 12 or Matric graduates who wish to enrol for vocational certificates N1 to N3, they have to repeat courses equivalent to Grade 10 to Grade 12. This understanding, I argue, represent a wastage of resources of students which could have been better spend elsewhere in higher education.

This perception exists, despite TVET colleges being regarded as the core component of the national development strategy (ETDP SETA, 2012), and therefore a high quality of their programmes should be essential for the improvement of the skills base of the country. That is when Grade 12 or Matric graduates are required or volunteer to repeat courses equivalent to Grade 10 to Grade 12. This understanding, I argue, represent a wastage of resources and time of students which could have been better spend elsewhere in higher education. the Government Gazette (RSA, 2008) has therefore noted that TVET colleges are expected to provide students with the necessary attributes required for employment.

However, Chisholm's (1997) response in this regard is that educational goals may sometimes be considered too ambitious. Nevertheless, college management practices therefore require compliance with the desired efficiency, accountability and performance targets for all its processes and programmes. This management regime, which tells us what, and how, things must be conducted, was, according to Down *et al.* (1999), perceived as a means of control and the manipulation of educators into desired patterns of behaviour. In fact, Lipman (2004) holds that accountability policies constitute an insidious mode of social discipline.

Nevertheless, these measures may actually be justified by the huge outlay of public funds in education, according to the Gazette (RSA, 2008). It would therefore be normal to expect a nation to demand positive (systemic improvement) results from TVET colleges which are authorised to spend the public funds. In fact, the nation can demand that TVET college managements be held accountable, given the substantial investment (through spending) in TVET college education of public funds. Hence, the Government Gazette's (RSA, 2008) note that all vocational education and training programmes that are offered at public TVET

colleges should be quality-assured (as a means of control) by Umalusi which is delegated to perform such a function.

TVET colleges are therefore found to be lacking in their capacity to actually deliver on their targets (of skilled graduates) which they were mandated to deliver. However, SETAs are expected to assist colleges in building such capacities. Colleges therefore had to develop good working relationships with SETAs, which may mean that they actively seek their (SETAs) counsel and support. However, as I argued in section 5.4, in spite of the government embracing neoliberal-underpinned market-oriented policies, outcomes in college education and training still do not meet expectations. This reality of TVET colleges' processes confirms that the strategy of pursuing efficiency targets at FET colleges will be an on-going process, and therefore will have to continue under the directives of the Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act (No. 3 of 2012). I will now proceed to answer the second subsidiary research question, namely:

- (iii) How do social justice-orientated educational discourses at TVET colleges inform the practices at these colleges?

One can probably argue from a historical perspective that the implementation of the National Party's apartheid policy created enormous social deprivation, particularly among the disenfranchised communities in South Africa's pre-1994 democratic era that left a legacy of educational inequality among its population. Christie (2003) therefore correctly claims that education policy and provision was one among many areas that required immediate attention to break with the racial distortions and assumptions of apartheid.

This challenging situation led to the urgency that was placed on the South African education and training (systemic) machinery to develop appropriate skills and capacities, particularly among the current black youth population (Mayer *et al.*, 2011). Badat and Sayed (2014) therefore note that South Africa's post-1994 educational goals are explicitly framed in relation to the existing and inherited order that specifically focuses on the advancement of human rights and freedoms, which was in line with John Rawls' justice as fairness.

Indeed, the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995) notes that the state should redress educational inequalities. This meant that those sections of our people who have suffered particular disadvantages, have 'the same quality of learning opportunities', according to Badat and Sayed (2014:131). Hence Lupton's (2005) claim that social justice in education demands, at the very minimum, that all students should have access to schools/colleges of the same quality.

In this regard, argues Akoojee (2002), there is allegedly a political imperative to enable increased black student numbers on campuses previously reserved for whites. However,

there can be little justification for its continued use as a viable strategy in the new democratic era. Akoojee (2002) nevertheless holds that Bergquist (1995) notes that access, and by implication quality, cannot be achieved without adequate resources. Badat and Sayed (2014), however, raised a rather disturbing thought in this regard, that the execution of social equity and redress interventions in educational practices may prove to be a challenge in the context of inadequate public financing.

Nevertheless, the White Paper for post-school education and training (RSA, 2013) holds that South Africa was building a new education and training system whose goal has been to meet the needs of a democratic society. This would explain policy developments that were directed at: first, democratising the education system by overcoming unfair discrimination; second, expanding access to education and training opportunities; and third, improving the quality of education, training and research (RSA, 2013). Norman-Major (2011), however, argues that without clear and immediate results, it is difficult to build support for programmes that are designed to reduce inequity and that are economical, effective or efficient.

However, at the time of writing, probably the most daunting concerns that confront educational practices, particularly at higher education institutions, pertain to student access and, more specifically, student fees. These are crucial matters that the educational authorities will urgently have to address. For example, Badat and Sayed (2014) remind us that there is a crucial need to increase the NSFAS budget for the benefit of academically deserving, needy students, which currently remains a concern as it appears that the NSFAS can no longer afford to support a continuously growing number of students flocking into, for example, TVET colleges.

I will however argue that state-driven policies aimed at equity have not really delivered the educational goods, due to the influence of neoliberal-based policies which may have resulted in some educational programmes for the poor not being implemented at all. This suggests, according to Akoojee (2002), that the need to ensure quality, at least in principle, is closely linked to equity and development. In order to achieve this objective, it requires that the teaching skills levels of all educators at TVET colleges be substantially raised. Sheppard and Sheppard (2012), however, argue that the South African post-secondary education system is highly inefficient due to the poorly prepared students' inability to cope with the demands made by post-secondary education programmes.

Christie (2006), however, reminds us of the ethical importance of engaging with the institutions of government to work for equal and socially just conditions for all. I will therefore suggest that a more holistic preparedness of the nation's youth (students), with the required social and business traits, should be regarded as a necessity, and not just to skill them as workers. In this regard, Giroux (2004) argues that even though career training and workforce

development may be priorities, students also need to be educated as critical citizens, in order to ensure the stability for a vibrant future democracy.

As I said in section 1.4 that I have found it necessary to add a third sub-question that will tighten the coherence level of this thesis by questioning the nature of the relationship(s) that may exist between an efficiency and social justice focus at TVET colleges in the execution of collegial processes.

- (iv) How does the relationship between efficiency and social justice play out in TVET colleges in respect of informing their educational practices and achievements?

The question that has to be answered refers to how one would enforce notions of social justice at TVET colleges with education under a regime of neoliberalism. Although social justice demands that the tenets that are enshrined in the South African Constitution be adhered to, the pursuit of efficiency practices at TVET colleges, during these troubled economic times in South Africa, means that a strong economic position is essential. The nation's economy needs to be growing at an acceptable real growth rate to generate the income to finance educational programmes.

Brodie (2007) holds that neoliberal fundamentalists envisage a state that elevates the market above all else and adopts market logic to guide its own conduct. In other words, they extend and disseminate market values to all institutions, which includes TVET colleges, as well as social actions and rewards individuals and institutions for enacting this vision. However, Lefebvre and Vietorisz (2007) caution that the pursuit of economic growth may actually work against the implementation of some other, perhaps equally important, goals such as equity and social sustainability. The pursuit of efficiency at TVET colleges therefore calls for specifying the ultimate ends of economic activities or policies. For example, Lefebvre and Vietorisz (2007) contend that an organisation may be an efficient profit maximiser, yet its monopolistic practices may detract from social welfare and should be curbed.

Social efficiency, according to Lefebvre and Vietorisz (2007), makes sense inherently only when it applies to the social, economic, political and cultural system as a whole. Therefore, social considerations at TVET colleges of the present and future should compel a conscious effort to reach a balance between availabilities and uses. The remedy for wasteful resource use is not austerity, for example, which is the favoured approach of the IMF and the World Bank by making use of structural transitions. In fact, governments have to be pressured by public opinion at home and abroad to introduce gradual, progressive changes in the institutions that underlie the socially inequitable functioning of the markets guides to attain socially desirable actions (Lefebvre and Vietorisz, 2007).

Lefebber and Vietorisz (2007:158) therefore advise that, although social concerns range over broad social and political-economic areas, some of which may conflict with one other, if both the government and markets are to be part of the solution rather than part of the failure to attain a well-functioning society, then the criteria for government efficiency and for the social efficiency of markets cannot be treated separately from one other.

I have now responded to answering the research questions and will now provide a brief summary of the main thoughts that were articulated in this chapter.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter sought to establish whether the implementation of market-oriented policies which allegedly would have pursued the establishment of improved efficiency levels and social justice practices at TVET colleges had been realised. There are great expectations from a range of stakeholders and interest groups on the contribution that this sub-sector has to make, in order for these goals to be achieved.

First, by raising the question whether TVET colleges have actually been able to deliver the desired pass rates in the short term, I can however conclusively respond with the answer no, even though improvement in certain areas in college education and training have been recorded. Second, with regard to the issue pertaining to the improvement of employment outcomes in the long term, it can be argued at this stage that this is problematic. I am referring here to the problematic situation that TVET college graduates experience in securing meaningful employment in the job market. I therefore support Chisholm's (1997:55) response that TVET's education goals may be considered as being too ambitious at this stage of the nation's economic development. I refer here to some restraining factors in achieving such goals, one of which is the low quality and inefficiency of TVET education practices, as I argued in section 6.2.

Third, the prevailing poor economic growth problems in South Africa have adversely influenced the implementation and/or sustainability of social justice programmes at TVET colleges. Even though, in some cases, the enrolment figures recorded have substantially improved, one could argue that the massification of student enrolments at TVET colleges has, as expected, negatively influenced the availability of resources and, consequently, also impacted similarly on the quality of its graduates. In fact, this observation is in line with Schwartzman's (2013) note that Ginsberg (2011) argues that few incoming college students have (adequately) been prepared for exercising critical discernment as consumers of TVET college education. This poor image of the colleges in the eyes of the public has resulted in low public and business confidence in the sector as an option or alternative to university education.

Although TVET colleges have, however, succeeded in increasing access and, to some extent, taken adequate measures to improve the enrolment figure by 90%, this could not have occurred without substantial pressure on the quality of those programmes. Despite some positive developments, such as the increases in enrolment and the greater equality in the gender and race of staff and students at TVET colleges, one may still question whether colleges are actually financially in a position to prepare students thoroughly for employment or self-employment; that is, on the scale that would meet the country's needs, since failing to do so may probably mean that TVET colleges may have set students up for failure by providing them with an inferior quality of education, which might eventually undermine quality standards at the workplace.

For example, Ramphele (2014:18) argues that 'it boggles the mind why we [South Africans] cannot learn from other nations such as Germany, Spain and Switzerland'. Apparently, these nations use simpler on-the-job training programme designs, one which may just through in-depth research and development and/or programmes, help business and industry absorb our TVET sector students and/or give second chances to students dropping out of their programmes. For example, programmes at the NQF Level 5 Higher Certificate level merit attention because these are primarily industry or vocationally-oriented qualifications which usually include a period of work-integrated learning (Stumpf *et al.*, 2012).

Owing to the largely theoretical nature of this study, being primarily based on secondary data, meant that I was compelled to draw my conclusions based largely on empirically untested sources. Another impediment to the development of this study centred on the unavailability of reliable data on the TVET college sector. In fact, I based my arguments with regard to TVET colleges primarily on data presented in reports, such as the ETDP SETA and TVET college 2010 audit reports, inclusive of some academic articles. Even Cosser *et al.*'s. (2011:49) audit report could not vouch for the authenticity of their data, by stating that 'data integrity has been compromised on some items due to poor college submissions'.

Thus, in view of the chiefly theoretical findings of this study, I would therefore suggest that an empirical study be undertaken to examine the actual consequences of efficiency practices in the TVET college sector. In fact, I expect that this approach may be able to confirm or refute the accuracy of the conclusions that I have drawn from data which were regarded as unreliable at the time of writing. It would therefore probably provide researchers with the most recent efficiency patterns, trends, equity achievements and practices at TVET colleges. For example, Babson's (2014) reference to the Dutch model for an educational-occupational system may potentially provide the government with the guidelines on how to address the NEET youth challenge.

However, given the limitations of this study and the unreliability of the available data, I identified, the following questions as warranting urgent and rigorous empirical research:

- (i) How do productivity policies that are aimed at general productivity, rather than narrow cost-cutting policies, underscore the aims of social justice?
- (ii) How need senior management find more effective ways in using existing resources and technology more efficiently to improve social justice practices at TVET colleges?
- (iii) Given the limited resources that are available to colleges, it would be fair to argue that substantial increases in student numbers at colleges will exert immense pressure on resources (including staff) to accommodate them, in addition to the quality of the training provided in such a resource-constrained environment. So then, what effect does the massive increase in student enrolment, as reported by Minister Nzimande, have on the quality of training?
- (iv) Given that students entering TVET colleges, for the most part, are products of an inadequate quality of education, is it feasible for the government to demand that TVET colleges produce graduates of a desired quality in the numbers that would meet the demands of industry?
- (v) According to Cosser *et al.* (2011), the quality of TVET colleges is judged by the performance of their outputs (graduates). Is this a wholly reliable measure considering that there are other social factors that also contribute to student performance?
- (vi) What are the actual employment uptake figures of TVET graduates from historically disadvantaged groups?

However, no such reliable data are available (at the time of writing) and therefore the question of whether TVET colleges have succeeded in responding to social justice cannot be answered unequivocally. Otherwise, 'policy-makers can take heart from the fact that within the context of the current climate of employment uncertainty, no country can claim to have the recipe for solving the problem of high youth unemployment' (Mlatsheni, 2012:41).

What I hope my study has achieved is to untangle the conceptual threats of efficiency-led discourses and calls for greater social justice outcomes. I hope that this disentanglement informs a suggested research agenda that will help strengthen the contribution that TVET colleges can make to both the economic growth of the country as well as the deepening of equity practices.

Therefore, the contribution I hope that my study makes to the debate is that – despite the tensions and potentially contradictory discourses – it is possible for TVET colleges to negotiate the precarious path between the two allegedly competing goals. The purpose of this study is to recognise the tensions in order to prevent conceptual confusion and actual

unwanted outcomes. However, further empirical studies need to be conducted to examine how in actual, pragmatic terms, this complex balance plays itself out in multiple practices and varying consequences.

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